

WHY BUSH WANTS AMNESTY ■ ABANDONING BRAIN-INJURED VETS

JULY 2, 2007

The American Conservative

CONFORMING TO
DIVERSITY



The rise and rule of political correctness

LOBBYING FOR DEBATE

Thank you for publishing Philip Weiss's "Mondoweiss: Chapter One" (June 4). His candid disclosures about how Jewish concerns reverberate through American politics and media are an important step toward uncovering potent—though often unrecognized—pressures that shape American governance and culture.

Unfortunately, these complex political currents often overlap Western taboos, and thus criticism (even discussion) of "Jewish issues" is often reserved for self-censoring Jewish intellectuals like Weiss or pro-Zionist Gentiles.

Weiss's candor is commendable. He concedes that he comes from a family milieu in which feelings of "Jewish superiority" were a fact of life and, in a similar vein, acknowledges implicitly that his public musings about topics like Jewish "dual loyalty" (to Israel) and the "predominance of Jewish money" in the Democratic Party are beyond the pale in American discourse—even by a Jewish blogger.

Weiss drops more than a few bombs as he explores this political minefield. That former President Harry Truman was a great supporter of Israel is widely known. But many Americans remain unaware of the covert machinations that produced Truman's level of political fealty to the Jewish state. Indeed, it's not unlikely that most Americans would be disheartened to learn that, according to Weiss, President Truman was in "desperate (financial) trouble" in 1948 and that organized Jewish groups funneled money his way, in a fashion that would likely be illegal today, thereby assuring extraordinary "access" to a sitting U.S. president. America's historically pro-Israel reflex from that year on must be understood within this unique context.

Indeed, as America's unfolding disaster in Iraq grinds on, and many powerful friends of Israel call for widening the war to Iran, the political anecdotes that Weiss comfortably files under "Jewish

issues" begin to have a significance and urgency. Clearly, many highly placed Zionists suffer from a colossal conflict of interest.

I hope that *The American Conservative* finds a legitimate, reasonable, and honest way to fully explore this conundrum. The time has arrived for any informed American to be allowed to scrutinize and weigh in on the far-reaching political impact of America's foremost ethnic lobby.

MARK GREEN

Palm Desert, Calif.

BRATTY BLOGGERS?

"Mondoweiss, Chapter One" confirms my impression that blogging is journalistically puerile precisely because it is unedited. Phil Weiss's editor is finally forced to squarely confront this reality by warning Weiss away from the "nuttness" path almost any intelligent writer might take absent editorial restraint.

Editing is much more than sentence structure and punctuation; the editor plays a social role as gatekeeper for public discourse, a mediating role between writers and readers. What constitutes "nuttness" is not objective but involves a lot of judgment. *TAC*'s readers might find Phil's editor asking whether his Christian wife's family would hide Phil more nutty than any of his critiques of Zionism, which might appear "nutty" to *The Observer*'s New York readership.

Does blogging exist because editors have abused their power or because journalists are spoiled brats who want everything their way?

DINO DRUDI

Washington, D.C.

BRAVE LOOSE WORLD

Cheryl Miller's review of the book *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love, and Lose at Both* (June 4) describes a very strange sexual world that modern women are making for themselves. It wasn't long ago that such behavior was the staple of social work-

ers' case books, but now we're told that blind promiscuity is "hip." This is one of many ways that Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is leaping from its pages and becoming threateningly real.

One can be forgiven for harboring a dark thought here. Gresham's Law, formally a statement on the degradation of currency as bad money drives out good, has been used with some justice to explain the triumph of the base and shallow in human behavior over the refined and subtle. The currency of sex is surely subject to this terrible law. And mountains of luck—you'll need it—to those who try to fight against such spiritual entropy.

J. WROBLEWSKI

British Columbia, Canada

CATCH THE BUG

It is clear that David Weigel's piece, "From MySpace to NoSpace" (May 7) warrants a follow up. If Al Gore created the Internet, Ron Paul now owns it. In May, the most searched-for phrase on the blog aggregate site Technorati.com was "Ron Paul." Paris Hilton came in fifth.

Ron Paul's YouTube subscribers are double that of the next highest candidate, Obama, and more than the next five highest candidates' subscribers combined. Paul is second only to John McCain in Republican MySpace friends and is the second most requested candidate on the popular Eventful.com site.

What is most interesting about all these stats is that Paul's popularity has come from nowhere. His growth has been exponential, or for those of us on the Internet, Ron Paul has gone "viral."

MICHAEL HOLT

Austin, Texas

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[ALLIES]

FOR ME, NOT FOR THEE

Turkey is now contemplating its own version of the Bush Doctrine, and the Bush administration is pretty unhappy about it. Turkey is increasingly vexed by the Kurdish state that dare not speak its name taking shape in northern Iraq. The autonomous Kurdish zone—the only area of Iraq that is probably not worse off since the American invasion—is not only an inspiration to stateless Kurds throughout the region, but it also plays host to the PKK, a Kurdish terrorist group that has been fighting Turkey for decades. Last month, the PKK reputedly set off a suicide bomb in Ankara that killed six and wounded 90. Turkey, a NATO ally, is understandably angry that the American-protected Kurds are hosting a terrorist group that threatens them.

Turkey has moved several divisions to the Iraq border and has lobbed shells while threatening a larger incursion to root out the terrorists. The Bush administration is mortified: a Turkish onslaught would pit two putative American allies against each other and bring chaos to the one part of Iraq that is comparatively stable. The current multisided Iraq War could metastasize further. But given the American example, Washington is having a difficult time explaining to Ankara why it shouldn't attack the non-country that harbors anti-Turkish terror groups. Admittedly it's a difficult question to answer. Reader suggestions should be forwarded to Condoleezza Rice, c/o Department of State.

[ELECTION]

FOOL ME TWICE

Political rhetoric has long been vacuous, calibrated to communicate as little as possible in the most fervent tones. But the last Republican debate plumbed a new low.

Asked if invading Iraq was a mistake, Romney flopped between “nonsequitor”



SANDY HUFFAKER WWW.CAGLECARTOONS.COM

and “null set” before concluding that it was “an unreasonable hypothetical.” Giuliani managed more resolve: “Absolutely the right thing to do. It’s unthinkable that you would leave Saddam Hussein in charge of Iraq and be able to fight the war on terror.” (No word about leaving bin Laden in charge of al-Qaeda.)

Had the mayor’s war-happy stage mates bothered to read the National Intelligence Estimate about WMD in Iraq? McCain: “I did not read that particular document.” Brownback: “I don’t remember that report.” Gilmore: “I know they get a lot of stuff and they can’t read everything.” Only Ron Paul—reprising his role as lone realist—would admit, “Our national security was not threatened. We’re threatened now by staying.”

That flash of sanity was fast eclipsed. What caused the 2006 midterm shake-up—“the worst Republican defeat in living memory”? “Spending, spending, spending,” said McCain. Romney and Brownback agreed—then spiced up that safe answer with “vision is the new frontier” and “the leading cause of fear in America today is that you’ll get cancer.” Thompson concluded that the GOP lost because “We didn’t come up with new ideas.” Disastrous war despised by a growing majority, anyone? Ron Paul to the rescue: “The president ran on a program of a humble foreign policy ... and he changed his tune.”

Paul scored again when the candidates were asked about the “most pressing moral issue facing this country.” Survey said abortion. Pro-choice Rudy resorted to a “moral obligation” to share “American ideals” with the rest of the world in an “appropriate way.” (At gun-point?) Paul: “we have accepted the principle of preemptive war.”

For that moment the fog parted—then swiftly closed. In a final segment that took the prize for ardent inanity, Giuliani ruled that “we shouldn’t be having a debate about legal immigration” then set out his definition of an American: “How much do you believe in freedom? ... The person who believes in that the most is the best American, and the person who doesn’t isn’t an American.” It’s easier to become president when those who disagree with you have their citizenship revoked.

[LAW]

SMALL CATCH

Those seeking justice for the perpetrators of the Iraq War will find the Scooter Libby verdict thin gruel. Yes, it is clear enough that Cheney’s top neocon aide broke the law: lying to the FBI and perjury before a grand jury are not trivial charges. Republicans loudly demanding that Bush pardon Libby because of his “loyalty” risk undermining any remaining sense that the GOP stands for law and order.

But no sane person can regard the full spectacle of the Bush administration's policies and think that efforts to out Valerie Plame and cover that crime are the offenses most obviously worthy of censure. This is a group that lied the country into an unnecessary war that has killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of Americans and Iraqis and continues to serve as al-Qaeda's principal recruiting and training ground. If an administration official were to serve time, how much more just would it be to punish the person who facilitated the forgery of the Niger documents, which helped persuade the country that Saddam was pursuing nuclear weapons? Or inserted false intelligence into Bush's speeches? Or passed classified information about our Iran policies to foreign diplomats? The Franklin trial is slated to commence this fall.

[STRATEGY]

THE BUSH-BIN LADEN AXIS

An American attack on Iran would be sold as a vital assault on international terrorism. But al-Qaeda would score a double play: bin Laden's vision of the Great Satan as an imperial aggressor would be validated, and we would be doing the Sunnis' dirty work against their Shi'ite enemies. The world's most wanted man couldn't ask for more.

Those who dismiss our foes as freedom haters will call this conspiracy theory. But consider the source: Zbigniew Brzezinski is one of the more sober foreign-policy thinkers on the scene. Wild fancies aren't exactly his stock-in-trade.

At a recent meeting of the Committee for the Republic, Brzezinski warned that George W. Bush's vow to hold Iran responsible for any al-Qaeda action planned on their soil loaded the terrorists' gun. And the president may know exactly what he's doing: what better jus-

tification for attacking the next target on his axis of evil?

The administration has long alleged that Iran harbors al-Qaeda operatives—contra the findings of the intelligence community. And as recently as May 14, Vice President Cheney told Fox News, "We are confident that there are a number of senior al Qaeda officials in Iran."

If he's correct, the way to the next neocon war is clear. And if Iran isn't already the al-Qaeda clubhouse Cheney claims, bin Laden may well send operatives to hoist his colors.

[IMMIGRATION]

SICK OF OPEN BORDERS

The story of Andrew Speaker, the now infamous trans-Atlantic traveler and tuberculosis case, may have faded from the headlines, but the bureaucratic incompetence he inadvertently revealed persists. One week after Speaker delivered his televised apology, Kalpana Dangol, a student at Colorado State University and native of Nepal, went to a Colorado Springs hospital complaining of abdominal pain. A few hours later she died. Her body had been ravaged by TB. Officials speculate that she contracted the disease in her native country, where according to the WHO, about 23 of every 100,000 people die of TB.

Dangol's story is tragic: a life cut short at 19. It is also disconcerting. Without knowledge of who enters the country, our homeland security system invites an epidemic.

In the 19th century, Ellis Island was staffed by doctors charged with protecting America from infectious disease. That now seems like a quaint relic of a restrictive era, but the health and financial costs of treating those of the world's sick who can cross America's borders have to be counted as yet another consequence of uncontrolled immigration. ■

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[cultural revolution]

Better Dead Than Rude

Political correctness began as a reasonable adjustment of manners, but as an ideology, it corrupts language and dulls thought.

By John Derbyshire

Cant, *n.* The expression or repetition of conventional, trite, or unconsidered ideas, opinions or sentiments; especially: the insincere use of pious phraseology

MY HOUSEHOLD FAVORS the brand of iced tea that has little believe-it-or-not factlets printed on the inside of the bottle caps. The other day, my son opened a bottle of this stuff, turned over the cap, and reading from it, asked the room: “What was the first human-made object to break the sound barrier?” Dad: “First *what* object?” Son (not very patient with this sort of thing): “The answer’s a whip.” Dad: “I know, but ... ‘human-made’? What happened to ‘man-made’?”

We all know what happened to it, of course. Political correctness—hereafter “PC”—happened to it. To say “man-made” would be wrong. Some female maker of whips somewhere might suffer hurt feelings.

This is the sensibility of our times. Since the late 1980s, when it first came to general attention and acquired a name, PC has been part of our lives. Those of us of a conservative temperament—those, I mean, who demand of any large social change that it be weighed in the scales of liberty, order, amenity, and reason, that it be justified—have been scoffing at, grumbling

about, deploring, or excoriating PC for 20 years now, yet its sillier manifestations can still make us gasp.

Item: ‘Stone Age’ is no longer acceptable, joining the list of other words and terms deemed offensive in polite society. ‘Primitive’ also is considered, well, primitive by some. ‘All anthropologists would agree that the negative use of the terms “primitive” and “Stone Age” to describe tribal peoples has serious implications for their welfare,’ the British-based Association of Social Anthropologists said Tuesday. ‘Governments and other social groups have long used these ideas as a pretext of [*sic*] depriving such peoples of land and their resources.’

—*Washington Times*

We are all familiar with stories of this kind, laughed at around the office water cooler or retailed on TV late-show monologues. PC is now part of the landscape. We are, in fact, at a point where PC fatigue has set in. News items like this one are as likely to generate sighs of resignation as giggles. In that sense, PC has won. To those who still mind it, PC is now just another disagreeable feature of the environment, like bad weather. And of course, a great many people don’t mind it at all.

The Stone Age story illustrates the most prominent fact about PC: it is mainly a linguistic phenomenon. Words and phrases that were commonplace 50 years ago are now taboo. Many ideas that were likewise commonplace may not now be put into spoken or written words. Some of those ideas were actually true so that the taboo on their expression hinders us in dealing with reality—not a problem for those noble dreamers who regard the “reality-based community” with scorn.

Many of these now forbidden words, phrases, and notions were widely considered obnoxious and insulting even in 1957 and had already been banned from polite society for decades. Others were useful and innocuous, and their outlawing seems arbitrary. I can certainly understand a Chinese person’s anger at being called a chink, but why would he mind being called an Oriental or hearing—what any Chinese person of my acquaintance will freely admit—that his countrymen are unusually fond of gambling?

Along with the proscribing and replacing of familiar terms has come a whole new vocabulary employed to deal with violators of these taboos. A recurring feature of our public life is the stylized drama played out when some person of significance utters a word like

“faggot” or asserts that black people make good sprinters. The little pantomime that ensues—condemnation, apology, penance, forgiveness—is dressed up in a jargon as prescribed and artificial as Oriental court ritual. The violator is guilty of “hate,” “bigotry,” or “prejudice.” If he uttered taboo words, they were “epithets” or “slurs.” He did not, in fact, utter them: he “spouted” or “spewed” them. (There is a Ph.D. thesis to be written by some student of linguistics about the fondness for “sp—” verbs in this context.) The noun “epithet” is preferentially qualified by one of a small set of adjectives now set aside for this purpose, being hardly ever used elsewhere: “vile,” “abhorrent,” “repugnant,” “hurtful.”

Language has also been overhauled in ways less emotionally charged. Nonfiction writers are pressed by their publishers to alternate “he” with “she” when speaking of unspecified individuals or even to use the preposterous “s/he.” They are told to write “BCE” and “CE” in place of “BC” and “AD,” to write “gender” for “sex,” “human-made” for “man-made,” and so on.

(On the first of those points, and by way of showing that the PC phenomenon is by no means restricted to the Anglosphere, I note the following comment by a friend recently returned from Spain: “In Spanish the ending of a word is used to define whether the subject is male or female. So while in English you can write ‘All of them,’ in Spanish it would have to be ‘todos y todas.’ This is too cumbersome even for PC devotees. The solution: ‘tod@s.’ I’m not kidding.” No, he’s not. A Google search for “tod@s” found 1,370,000 occurrences. I have not been able to locate any definitive advice on the pronunciation of “tod@s,” but then I don’t yet know how to pronounce “s/he,” which I spotted recently in a White House press statement. In this essay, I shall use only

generic “he” on the principle declared by Winston Churchill: “The male embraces the female.”)

This is all familiar. On the evidence of my own social contacts, I believe that most people born after 1970 have internalized the PC taboos and comply with them unthinkingly. Such complaints as one still hears come from the overforties. Even they have a defeatist air. I repeat: PC has won. It is now the cant of our age.

A NEW DECORUM

What accounts for this victory? It won’t do to say that PC was imposed on us. We are a free people. We can be persuaded, but not easily browbeaten. If PC is now part of our everyday language, it must be because we wished it so—or at least were insufficiently passionate in wishing it not so.

We accepted PC because it appeals to the feeling, widespread in times of rapid social change, that a new decorum is called for to eliminate previous ugliness, unfairness, or unkindness. Seen from this point of view, PC is not altogether a bad thing. Every human society needs a decorum. Probably every society needs speech taboos. (I note that “taboos” appears on anthropologist Donald E. Brown’s list of “human universals.”) New social circumstances call for an overhaul of the agreed decorum, for a reformation of manners.

The original Society for the Reformation of Manners was established in London in 1691, amid the dynastic and religious upheavals of the later Stuart dynasty. The Society’s explicit aim was to remoralize Britain after the excesses of the Stuart Restoration, which had itself been a reaction to the Puritanism of Oliver Cromwell’s Commonwealth. (Ironically in the context of modern PC, one of the society’s main objects was the suppression of homosexuality.)

The phrase “reformation of manners” was then taken up by various causes in the 18th and 19th centuries, notably by William Wilberforce for his anti-slavery campaigns of 1789-1807. It might very well have been a slogan of the PC movement in the later 20th century. In all cases, the general idea was the same: We used to think like *this*, which led to much suffering. By persuasion and legislation, we shall bring people to think like *this*, and society will be improved thereby.

The great changes that followed World War II—new styles of work, fast-rising prosperity, the spread of higher education, the growth of the welfare state—gave Americans both more freedom and more equality than any previous generation had known. This new society needed a new decorum: new habits of speech and social exchange.

PC is the realization of this need for a new decorum. It has intellectual roots, as any social movement must. The PC I am discussing, in fact—the PC of speech and manners—is the offspring of a powerful ideology. One might call the ideology Strong PC, with the derivative speech-and-manners aspect being Weak PC.

Strong PC, which has now attained near total dominance of our universities’ humanities departments, belongs to the cast of mind—traceable back through the Critical Theory of the 1930s, via Marx, to the 19th-century German idealists and beyond—that places power at the center of human affairs, reducing all of history, sociology, psychology, even literature to a “who, whom” game in which someone is always oppressing someone else. It has close affinities with the “blank slate” theories of human nature that took over the human sciences in the middle of the 20th century.

The Strong PC ideology has found its natural home in the academy and its

most prominent expression in the cult of Diversity. You can't cross a modern campus today without encountering a Museum of Tolerance, a Tunnel of Oppression, or an Office of Diversity Programs. (Washington State University has a chief diversity officer with a full-time staff of 55 and a \$3 million annual budget.) College freshmen are relentlessly badgered with Strong-PC propaganda. Intensive efforts are made to instill guilt and shame in those who are white, male, heterosexual, and able-bodied.

Ordinary citizens, however, are largely indifferent to, or ignorant of, this intellectual background. To most, PC is a way of dealing more fairly with their fellow citizens, of acknowledging others' rights to as much of the glorious new freedom, prosperity, and equality of the post-World War II world as we enjoy. PC has been, for most Americans, not an ideological crusade but a reformation of manners—a necessary, and to many, a welcome one.

FAMILIARITY BREEDS PC

The greatest driving force behind PC was the desire to rectify relations with people of other races. The key role of multiracialism in PC's rise can be seen by comparing the American experience with the British.

To this writer, raised in Britain but now long resident in the U.S., the triumph of PC across the pond has been surprising. When the first stirrings of PC began to be talked about in Britain, it was thought to be an entirely American phenomenon and was widely mocked for just that reason.

As an aspect of the general oddity of Americans, PC did not seem especially new to the British. They had a long tradition of regarding their American cousins as mealy-mouthed canters, given to prissy bowdlerizations of the common language. British schoolboys of the

1950s used to chuckle at Americanisms like "back of" for "behind," "rooster" for "cock," "chickadee" for "tit," "rock" for "stone," and "pocketbook" for "purse."

A rock, for example, in the British usage of the word, is at least a yard wide, so retailed American news reports of demonstrators "throwing rocks" at police brought to our British minds an image of so many Ajaxes heaving mighty boulders, till our schoolmasters explained that "stone" is used in the Bible

YOU CAN'T CROSS A MODERN CAMPUS TODAY WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING A MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE OR AN OFFICE OF DIVERSITY PROGRAMS. WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY HAS A CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER WITH A FULL-TIME STAFF OF 55.

to mean "testicle" and so was ruled out of American English at an early date as unacceptable. ("Purse" was an 18th-century slang term for the scrotum.)

The American language, we were thus given to believe, was strictly policed by armies of sour-faced old maids. We British were more sturdy, less afraid of body parts, closer to the clear original springs of Anglo-Saxon. One of the landmarks in my hometown in the English midlands was the Cock Hotel, an old pub located at a key road junction. The bus that took you there from the town center displayed a sign at front and back saying "The Cock"—not a thing you would see in the U.S.

There was a similar division over race words. Agatha Christie's 1939 bestseller *Ten Little Niggers* was published in Britain under that title until 1965, but Christie's American publisher insisted on a title change to *And Then There Were None* for the very first U.S. edition in 1940. Similarly, none of us thought there was anything odd about the name of Guy Gibson's dog in the classic 1954 British war movie "The Dam Busters." It was a black dog, and that's what black

dogs were commonly called—one of my uncles had a Nigger, too. The year after "The Dam Busters" came out, my sister was accepted into a good girl's secondary school in our town and was given a booklet specifying the school rules and dress code. The colors of the school uniform were given as "sky blue and nigger brown." (There was a minor fuss in Canada recently when a black customer took delivery of a Chinese-made sofa bearing a tag that described its color as

"nigger brown." Plainly someone was using an out-of-date dictionary. My edition of *A New English-Chinese Dictionary*, issued in 1975 by the Joint Publishing Co. of Hong Kong, has an entry for "nigger brown," the Chinese translation being *shen zongse*, literally "deep brown.")

Similarly, "blackface" was shamed out of American entertainment by the early 1950s, but lingered on in Britain in the immensely popular "Black and White Minstrel Show," which ran on British TV until 1978. Yellowface lasted somewhat longer than blackface in the U.S., David Carradine still playing kung-fu master Kwai Chang Caine in 1972. (The movie detective Charlie Chan was played through the 1930s and 1940s by, successively, a Swedish-American, a German-American, and an Anglo-Irish Bostonian.)

The British were able to maintain this blithe attitude to the sensibilities of black people because they never saw any. Certain small districts in the bigger British seaports—London, Liverpool, Cardiff—were multiracial, but most British people never saw a black person

from one year's end to the next. My schoolyard playmates—with whom I used to select partners for games via the traditional chant: "Eeny, meeny, miny, mo, catch a nigger by his toe"—were uniformly English, their grandparents born, with one or two exceptions, within five miles of the school. To us, an Irishman was exotic. We occasionally got glimpses of black servicemen from a nearby USAF base, but their blackness was swallowed up in their Americanness, a thing so strange in itself as to swamp all other strangeness.

The much more careful, more circumscribed race speech of middle-class Americans was the source of great amusement to those Brits who were aware of it.

"I presume the Loved One was Caucasian?"

"No, why did you think that? He was purely English."

—*The Loved One*, Evelyn Waugh (1947)

These amused observations were commonly followed by some remarks on American hypocrisy about race. As precious as the language might be (it was said), the American reality was harsh. Genteel Americans would not utter the N-word, but they kept the N's in their place nonetheless. Waugh's mortician followed up with: "This is a restricted park. The Dreamer has made that rule for the sake of the Waiting Ones. In their time of trial they prefer to be with their own people."

Considering that Britain's wealth was, as George Orwell never tired of pointing out, built on the labors of dark-skinned coolies in distant places, this supercilious attitude toward America and her race problem was a hypocrisy greater than the one being scoffed at. The distant places being distant, however, and ruled over by a small specialized cohort of the lower-upper-middle classes, the British were not obliged to think about

them and could be smug in their cost-free tolerance. Thus, when PC first appeared, it was assumed by the British to be just those vinegary old maids at work again.

As it turned out, American PC has been less thorough going than the British variety. The United States has been a multiracial society from its founding, the red and black always mixed in with the white. The care with which educated Americans have always deployed racial terms—the absurdly exaggerated care, as it seemed to British observers—was a natural response to this familiar fact. With the reshuffling of the racial deck that occurred in the 1960s following the Civil Rights movement and the end of legal segregation, PC supplied the necessary adjustment of language and manners—a move from one way of dealing with the old familiar situation to another.

IN OXFORD LAST YEAR, A **STUDENT WAS FINED** FOR INQUIRING OF A MOUNTED POLICEMAN IF HIS **HORSE WAS GAY**. "HE MADE **HOMOPHOBIC COMMENTS** THAT WERE **DEEMED OFFENSIVE** TO PEOPLE PASSING BY," EXPLAINED A POLICE SPOKESMAN.

In Britain, on the other hand, the almost perfectly monoracial society of my own childhood was transformed, in a single generation, to multiracialism. It was not a mere reformation of manners that was called for, but a revolution. That revolution duly took place. As revolutions will—and aided by the absence in Britain of any constitutional free speech guarantees—the PC triumph in Britain left the old order in ruins, to the degree that citizens now fear to speak about problems of multiracialism in any terms at all.

It is actually a criminal offense in today's Britain to use "threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour" to

stir up hatred against anyone on grounds of color, race, nationality, or ethnic origin. New legislation will shortly add religion to the list, and there is of course a corresponding raft of laws against "sexism" and "homophobia." In Oxford last year, a student was fined £80 on the spot for inquiring jocularly of a mounted policeman if his horse was gay. "He made homophobic comments that were deemed offensive to people passing by," explained a police spokesman, apparently baffled that anyone might object to the fine.

And Britain's PC revolution has, as revolutions will, devoured its children. It was not imposed on an unwilling population over there, any more than it was here. There was a need for a new decorum to cope with society's new shape, and PC filled the need. The white, Christian, Anglo-Celtic inhabitants of middle-class Britain welcomed it on that basis. Now they are stunned and demoralized.

Following a 2001 riot by Muslims in the north-English town of Blackburn, Tony Blair's government commissioned a report that noted widespread and increasing residential segregation in that town, coupled with a great reluctance to talk about it. According to the *Daily Mail*:

The report highlights the phenomenon of 'white flight' from parts of Blackburn as Asian Muslims move in to neighbourhoods—with pubs closing, shops changing in character and white children gradually becoming the minority in local schools.

Estate agents told how white people stopped buying property in such areas, fuelling segregation, but white residents were reluctant to speak openly about their reasons for leaving.

TV documentary producer Stephen Scott told the *Mail*, “Many people we spoke to wouldn’t appear on screen. We found a great nervousness—people didn’t feel able to speak openly about their unease about the way things were changing and about the gulf between the two communities. We were very struck by that. They struggled to find a way to say they didn’t want to be taken over. They had no way of expressing it. They were afraid of saying the wrong thing and coming across as racist.”

Thus PC, which only reformed manners in the U.S., has revolutionized them in Britain. The sons and grandsons of those who cheerily mocked American race manners now slink around in fear of the PC police—who are the actual police, with full powers to fine, arrest, and charge.

CLEAR YOUR MIND OF CANT

A reformation of manners cannot be considered complete until people’s thinking has been changed. It is all very well to scrub the language clean of racism, homophobia, and the rest, but how can we be sure we have accomplished that inward revolution, too? Perhaps people follow the linguistic codes for social and prudential reasons, while nursing incorrect thoughts in the dark inner chambers of their minds.

Is it, in fact, possible to reform thought by reforming language? These are deep waters, in which philosophers and linguists have been fishing for centuries. Confucius was, I believe, the first to assert that if you get the language right, all else will follow: “If names be not correct, language is not in accor-

dance with the truth of things. If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success. When affairs cannot be carried on to success ...” etc. (*Analects*, XIII.3.) Stronger forms of the same idea emerged from the Boasian anthropology of the early 20th century, culminating in the famous—or notorious, depending on your point of view—Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis of the 1950s, which argued that the grammatical forms and categories of a language mold the thought of speakers.

Dr. Johnson disagreed, calling language “the dress of thought.” But even Johnson knew that the utterance of sweet nothings, once it becomes habitual, might seduce a lazy mind into thinking that those polite vapiditys represent actual facts.

My dear friend, clear your *mind* of cant. You may *talk* as other people do: you may say to a man, ‘Sir, I am your most humble servant.’ You are not his most humble servant. You may say, ‘These are bad times; it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times.’ You don’t mind the times. You tell a man, ‘I am sorry you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet.’ You don’t care sixpence whether he is wet or dry. You may *talk* in this manner; it is a mode of talking in Society: but don’t *think* foolishly.

—Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*; May 15, 1783

This injunction illustrates the importance of italics. The great Tory had no particular objection to cant, so long as it stayed on the tongue. He saw it as a useful and irreducible component of everyday behavior, “a mode of talking in Society.” Several modes, in fact. Elsewhere Johnson speaks of “lovers’ cant”—the affirmations of eternal fidelity and unqualified adoration by means of

which, with more or less sincerity, the swains of Johnson’s day (courting fashions have since changed somewhat) pressed their claims to intimacy on the objects of their passion.

We can all think of other varieties of cant. One that I myself find particularly irritating is the habit that Third World bazaar hucksters have of addressing prospective customers as “My friend.” “When and how did I become your friend?” I want to yell at them, but of course that would be uncharitable. They are being no more dishonest than the stranger who inquires about my health. They only have an inadequate grasp of the rules of modern English cant.

The important thing, as Dr. Johnson said, is to clear our *minds* of cant. We may *say* cheery falsehoods to each other, in contexts where we all understand that it is only “a mode of talking in Society” that is being employed. In the interior of our skulls, however, we should not entertain cant nor any other kind of detectable falsehood.

Easier said than done. Thinking is hard work; cant provides a ready-made substitute. By way of example, consider the words spoken by our president, George W. Bush, at the funeral service for Ronald Reagan: “He believed that bigotry and prejudice were the worst things a person could be guilty of.” This remark excited some discussion on the blogs, the general opinion being that Bush’s cant generator had run away with his tongue, causing him to make his predecessor seem foolish. The worst things? Worse than homicide, rape, or grand larceny? Worse than bilking your clients, cheating on your wife, betraying your friends, or disowning your children?

Then someone noticed that Reagan actually had expressed the notion Bush attributed to him. In a 1938 letter, Reagan had written, “I was raised from

childhood by parents who believed bigotry and prejudice were the worst things a person could be guilty of.”

Was this just cant at a very high level? Or has PC, the cant of our age, actually infected presidential minds to such a degree that they really believe “bigotry and prejudice” to be more flagitious than, say, deliberately spreading lethal diseases? Given what we know of the personalities and inner lives of Reagan and Bush, I think we have to conclude that, yes, these are real beliefs sincerely expressed.

If two such successful members of the high political class truly believe this gibberish about “bigotry and prejudice,” we have to suppose that many other movers and shakers do, too. That matters a great deal all around.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE PC APOCALYPSE

There are at least four areas in which the apparent internalization of PC cant has been particularly poisonous: education, immigration, law enforcement, and war.

Education. Educational practice has long been a playground for PC’s “experiments against reality,” with the ludicrous No Child Left Behind Act, legislating that all students must be above average, as the culmination of those experiments.

Much energy has gone into a sissification of the schools—an effort to get boys behaving like girls. Fighting—a normal activity among small boys—is now considered an offense so horrible as to justify suspension and psychiatric intervention. “Use your words,” our sons are told, when they would rather, and would be better and healthier, using their fists. Schoolyard confrontations that would once have been taken to the gym to be decided with boxing gloves on now end with clenched-teeth apologies and grudging handshakes

under the anxious eye of some senior staff member, usually female. Repeat offenses are dealt with via tranquilizing medications.

The converse thing—getting girls to be more boyish—has, where it has been attempted, mainly worked to the further disadvantage of boys, as with the ruthless application of Title IX of the 1972 education law to destroy athletic opportunities for male students.

PC HAS RENDERED IMMIGRATION WELL NIGH UNMENTIONABLE, EXCEPT WITHIN THE NARROW CONFINES OF A FEW VACUOUS PC-APPROVED CLICHÉS: “NATION OF IMMIGRANTS,” “OUT OF THE SHADOWS,” ETC.

The language of education is even more punctiliously PC than that of society at large. I have just returned from the annual field day at my son’s school, the events terminating in a, yes, “tug-o’-peace.” Talking to my son, I contemptuously called it a “tug-o’-mayhem, massacre, and blood-spattered death.” He laughed. He liked that. He’s a boy.

Immigration. PC has rendered this topic, a matter of tremendous national moment needing serious discussion, well nigh unmentionable, except within the narrow confines of a few vacuous PC-approved clichés: “nation of immigrants,” “out of the shadows,” etc. Efforts to broaden the conversation are countered with savage reprisals from the heaviest artillery pieces in the PC armory. *Reductio ad Hitlerum* is frequently and shamelessly deployed. The other day I heard columnist Linda Chavez on Laura Ingraham’s radio show being challenged to defend her assertion that opponents of the recent Senate immigration bill “hate Mexicans.” In a trice, Ms. Chavez was accusing immigration restrictionists of favoring eugenics. *Eugenics!*

Law enforcement. The fact, borne out by every statistical inquiry under the sun, that some racial groups are more inclined to criminality than others, is of course anathema to those who have internalized PC precepts. Any program of law enforcement that delivers disproportionate numbers of black or Hispanic perpetrators to the courts and prisons is *ipso facto* considered to be “racist.” Such programs are strongly discouraged.

In my own county of Suffolk (New York), the police launched a campaign against unlicensed drivers. Within three weeks they arrested 50 such, with Hispanics heavily over-represented. The police commissioner, on orders from the district attorney and a local judge, thereupon suspended the program on suspicion of “racial profiling.” A revised version of the program has since been permitted, but presumably, while the program was in suspense, some county residents—myself, perhaps—might have been killed or maimed in crashes with unlicensed drivers, another instance of the “better dead than rude” mentality that has long ruled our airport-security screening procedures.

War. By the turn of the century, many of us feared that PC had so emasculated our language and manners as to have rendered us incapable of any collective action against hostile nations. If you may not speak of—may not notice—the negative characteristics of other nations, cultures, sexes, or “orientations”; if the incorrigible selfishness of us white, male Americans prevents us from seeing that all men are brothers with the same

motives and aspirations; if pride in Western civilization must yield to self-abasement before the moral superiority of the non-West; then why should we bother to defend our country? Would we even know how to do so by any method other than “using our words”?

I was therefore glad to see us acting vigorously against Afghanistan and Iraq, imagining that these campaigns would be in the monitory style of 19th-century British gunboat diplomacy: smash their forts, kill a few leaders, then get the Marines back on board and away. I had reckoned without PC and its lunatic spawn, “compassionate conservatism.” We had, apparently, embarked on a campaign to bring to the Afghans and Iraqis the kind of consensual government they surely yearned for, all peoples being precisely equal in their collective aptitudes and desires. The results can be seen on the TV news any night of the week.

THE COMING PC CRACKUP

PC was a response to great social changes. It has not been all bad. Some softening of manners toward other races, and toward homosexuals, was proper. So was a fairer recognition of the rights and abilities of women. We needed a new decorum.

Not all systems of decorum are equal, though. The PC I have been talking about, the Weak PC of speech and manners, has a deep flaw, which probably renders the new decorum unstable. The flaw is that Strong PC, the ideology underpinning Weak PC, is premised on falsehoods about human nature.

This is, I think, quite widely understood now—much more widely than was the case 20 years ago. Consider, for example, the lawsuit recently launched by George W. Bush’s attorney general against the Fire Department of New York. The suit charges that the FDNY practices racial discrimination. The evidence for this charge—the sole

and only evidence—is that black and Hispanic applicants scored lower on the department’s entrance exams in 1999 and 2002 than white applicants did. In the 1999 test, about 90 percent of white applicants had a passing score, but only 61.2 percent of black and 77 percent of Hispanic test takers passed. In 2002, the figures were 97.2 percent of white applicants passing, versus 85.6 percent for black applicants and 92.8 percent for Hispanic applicants, an illustration of the simple mathematical truth that you can narrow these gaps by making tests easier. In the limit, when the test is infinitely easy, all groups average 100 percent, and the gaps have vanished!

There is no allegation in the complaint as filed that the Fire Department marked the tests incorrectly. The complaint is, so far as I can understand it, that clever racists in the Fire Department—the same department that lost 343 brave firefighters on 9/11—designed the questions so skillfully that black and Hispanic applicants were bound to

hand, and blacks and Hispanics, on the other, there can be few people who believe that any injustice has taken place. We are not yet at the point where it is permissible to scoff openly at the idea that test scores can ever be equalized across all races, but to judge from private conversations, and some published commentary on the event—Heather Mac Donald’s in *City Journal*, for instance—we are getting close.

Other educational process are well in motion: the Iraq War, the slow disintegration of No Child Left Behind, the statistics about Hispanics that are emerging—in spite of all the efforts of the PC establishment to prevent them doing so—from the immigration debates. Behind those, like a slow-rising tsunami, are beginning to come the results of research programs in the human sciences: in neuroscience, brought by new imaging techniques; in human genetics, following the 2003 mapping of the human genome; in paleo-anthropology, primatology, and evolutionary biology. Aspects of our human

THE SUIT CHARGES THAT THE **FDNY PRACTICES RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**. THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS CHARGE—THE SOLE AND ONLY EVIDENCE—IS THAT **BLACK AND HISPANIC APPLICANTS SCORED LOWER ON THE DEPARTMENT’S ENTRANCE EXAMS IN 1999 AND 2002 THAN WHITE APPLICANTS DID**.

score lower than white applicants. We are not told how the FDNY did this or why they do not get themselves off the hook by doing it in reverse: devising questions that disproportionately baffle white test takers.

Thirty years ago, the lawsuit would have met with broad approval. Today, after decades of observing in untold numbers of different situations the intractable gaps in cognitive abilities between whites and Asians, on the one

nature that have been argued over for millennia by philosophers and ideologues will soon become matters of cold scientific fact.

You may drive Nature out with a pitchfork, said Horace, but she will come running back. So she will. I believe we can already hear the pattering sound of her feet coming up the path. ■

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Press 0 for Arabic

Washington tries to fight the war on terror in English only.

By Robert Bryce

ON NOVEMBER 7, 2005, I sat in seat 13C on American Airlines flight 4631 from Austin to Raleigh, which then connected to another flight to Washington. America's representative to the Arab world, Karen Hughes, was seated in 13B.

We had met before, in the late 1990s, while I was working for the *Austin Chronicle* and Hughes was Gov. George W. Bush's chief press aide. After exchanging pleasantries, I inquired about her new job. About three months earlier, Bush had appointed her under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs. Her portfolio included engaging the Arab community and, as the State Department's website explains, confronting "ideological support for terrorism around the world."

I asked the obvious question: was she learning to speak Arabic? "No," she quickly replied. "I'm too old for that." Interesting. So what were the Bush administration's plans for development in the Islamic world? Were they going to encourage literacy, sponsor English-language programs, or perhaps build some libraries? Hughes made it clear that language skills and libraries were not in their game plan. "I don't care if they can read," Hughes declared. "I just don't want them to bomb us."

Therein lies the essence of the Bush administration's attitude toward the Arab world: We don't need to learn the language. We don't need to engage them on a cultural level. We just need to engage our massive military machinery, and all will be fine.

But all is not fine. The Iraq War is growing more catastrophic by the day. The danger of another bloody conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is rising. The death toll from the fighting in Lebanon between government forces and Islamic groups is mounting. And America's image throughout the Islamic and Arabic-speaking world continues to be pummeled.

Perhaps at no time in recent memory has America's relationship with the Islamic world been at a lower ebb than it is today. And yet the U.S. military, State Department, and American intelligence agencies appear to have little, if any, interest in increasing their Arabic language skills. That dire lack will hamstring America's ability to engage the Arab world for years to come and will likely assure that the "long war" that the Pentagon keeps talking about will become a reality.

There are now 280 million people on the planet who speak Arabic, making it the fourth most common language after Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and English. By next year, some 43 million Arabic-speaking people will be using the Internet.

Contrast those numbers with these two figures: six and 33.

Six. That's the number of American personnel stationed inside the U.S. embassy in Baghdad who can speak Arabic fluently, according to the Iraq Study Group. While most of the media's attention focused on the report's recommendations for a multilateral approach to American involvement in Iraq, one of

the most important findings was buried on page 92: the American Embassy in Baghdad, which has some 1,000 State Department personnel (that number does not include all of the service and security workers) has just 33 people who can speak Arabic at all, only 6 of whom are fluent.

And 33. Coincidentally, that's also the number of personnel inside the FBI who can speak any Arabic. According to a *Washington Post* story published last October, the agency's International Terrorism Operations Sections "do not require any agents to know Arabic, even though the sections coordinate all foreign terrorism investigations. Only four agents in ITOS have any familiarity with Arabic, and none of them are ranked above elementary proficiency." The head of one of the ITOS sections, Michael J. Heimbach, testified in a deposition that "knowledge of the Arabic language is not a skill set utilized by [the counter-terrorism group]." Further, out of the 12,000 agents at the FBI, only six were ranked as either "advanced professional" or "advanced professional, plus" when it came to Arabic skills.

Need more bad news? There's plenty. Last August, a study by the Government Accountability Office found that at the State Department, of 160 positions requiring proficiency in Arabic, only 64—or about 40 percent—were filled by qualified personnel. When it came to specialists in Arab culture, the GAO found that 75 percent of the jobs at the State Department were staffed by people who couldn't meet the require-

ments. "Many public diplomacy officers in the Muslim world cannot communicate with local audiences as well as their positions require," said the GAO. "For example, an information officer in Cairo stated that his office does not have enough Arabic speaking staff to engage the Egyptian media effectively."

Arabic is an extremely difficult language for English speakers to learn. It requires a minimum of one year of full-time study to become capable and far longer to be truly fluent. That kind of time commitment has little appeal in an impatient American culture that wants things to happen right away. But the gulf between the U.S. and the Arab world isn't just about language. It's also about a basic level of cultural awareness.

Last year, Jeff Stein, the national security editor at *Congressional Quarterly*, wrote a story that revealed that some of the highest ranking members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Congress don't even know the difference between Sunnis and Shia. In one instance, Stein asked Willie Hulon, the

saying that the "Sunnis are more radical than the Shia. Or vice versa."

Stein continues to do great reporting on this issue. On May 25, he wrote about an early 2001 meeting between Doug Feith, a leading neoconservative and architect of the Iraq War, and Patrick Lang. Feith was looking for someone to head the Pentagon's office of special operations. Lang, a former Green Beret who had done three tours in South Vietnam, was a top candidate—or at least he was until he met with Feith. When Feith learned that Lang spoke Arabic, and spoke it well, and that Lang "really know[s] the Arabs," Feith told Lang that it was "too bad."

In the neocons' worldview, knowing Arabs, and even worse, knowing how to talk to them, counts as a negative. Needless to say, Feith didn't hire Lang for the job.

It's not just the Bush administration that discounts the need for Arabic. The U.S. military has more interest in high-tech weapons than in cultural and language skills. This year, the military will

help them deal with the ongoing insurgency.

The need for Arabic language skills is not just about Iraq, it's about America's strategic future and the changing character of warfare. Military historian and theorist Martin van Creveld, who teaches at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is among a growing group of analysts who believe that warfare is moving away from major clashes between nation-states and toward more insurgent-type conflicts. "Future wars," he wrote in 2000, "will be overwhelmingly of the type known, however inaccurately, as 'low intensity.'" For Creveld, that means that the world's military forces will "have to adjust themselves to this situation by changing their doctrine, doing away with much of their heavy equipment and becoming more like the police."

Police work requires knowing the people in the neighborhood. It requires discussion and frequent contacts. With regard to the Arab and Islamic worlds, it means understanding the worldviews of groups like Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, and, of course, al-Qaeda.

Chet Richards, a retired Air Force officer who speaks Arabic and was stationed in Saudi Arabia, believes that the changing character of warfare means that "cultural knowledge is as important—or more important—than putting munitions on targets." Alas, Richards, who has written extensively on both modern warfare and on the strategies of America's greatest military theorist, the late John Boyd, believes that "when it comes to cultural understanding of the Arab world, we aren't even on first base." ■

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CONGRESSMAN TERRY EVERETT, THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF A SUBCOMMITTEE FOR INTELLIGENCE ISSUES, SAID THAT THE SPLIT BETWEEN SUNNIS AND SHIA WAS "DIFFERENCES IN THEIR RELIGION, DIFFERENT FAMILIES, OR SOMETHING."

head of the FBI's new national security branch, which Islamic sect dominated Hezbollah and Iran. Hulon responded "Sunnis." Wrong.

When Stein put similar questions to Congressman Terry Everett, the outgoing Republican vice chairman of a subcommittee in the House of Representatives responsible for intelligence issues, Everett said that the split between Sunnis and Shi'ites was "differences in their religion, different families, or something." Another member of Congress had a similarly vague response,

spend about \$200 million on the Defense Language Institute, the school that teaches foreign languages to about 3,500 soldiers and other government officials each year. Meanwhile, the Pentagon is now purchasing more than 181 copies of the F-22 fighter plane; each one costs \$361 million. In other words, the U.S. is spending nearly twice as much to buy a single airplane as it spends per year teaching language skills to its personnel. And it is doing so even as U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq continue to be desperately short of Arabic speakers who can

The Martyr of Mosul

On April 1, Palm Sunday, after bullets were fired into the Church of the Holy Spirit in Mosul during mass, the pastor, Fr. Ragheed Ganni, a Chaldean Catholic,

e-mailed friends at the *Asia Times*: “We empathize with Christ, who entered Jerusalem in full knowledge that the consequence of His love for mankind was the cross. Thus while bullets smashed our church windows, we offered our suffering as a sign of love for Christ.”

The attacks continued. Father Ragheed wrote again: “Each day we wait for the decisive attack, but we will not stop celebrating mass; we will do it underground, where we are safer. I am encouraged in this decision by the strength of my parishioners. This is war, real war, but we hope to carry our cross to the very end with the help of Divine Grace.”

As the bombings in Mosul and Baghdad rose during April and May and priests were kidnapped, Father Ragheed grew weary. In his last e-mail, May 28, he wrote, “We are on the verge of collapse.”

A day before, Pentecost Sunday, a bomb had exploded in his church, and Fr. Ragheed seemed dispirited. “In a sectarian and confessional Iraq, will there be any space for Christians? We have no support, no group who fights for our cause; we are abandoned in the midst of the disaster. Iraq has already been divided. It will never be the same. What is the future of our Church?”

Though tempted by despair, Fr. Ragheed did not give up hope. “I may be wrong, but I am certain about one thing, one single fact that is always true: that the Holy Spirit will enlighten people so that they will work for the good of humanity, in this world so full of evil.”

On Trinity Sunday, a week after Pentecost, after mass, Father Ragheed and three subdeacons were seized, taken away, and murdered. Their killers placed vehicles loaded with explosives around the bodies so that no one would dare approach them.

The story of “The Last Mass of Father Ragheed, a Martyr of the Chaldean Church,” is related by Sandro Magister of www.Chiesa.

Father Ragheed had completed his studies in Rome in 2003, Magister writes, and had returned full of hope. “That is where I belong, that is my place,” he said of Iraq, “Saddam has fallen, we have elected a government, we have voted for a constitution.”

Since 2003, an immense tragedy has befallen the Iraqi Christians. In 2000, Chaldeans, Syro-Catholics, Syro-Orthodox, Assyrians from the East, Catholic and Orthodox Armenians, and Greek-Melkites together numbered 1.5 million. Today perhaps 500,000 remain. Hundreds of thousands have found sanctuary in Syria and Jordan, tens of thousands in Egypt and Lebanon. Among the refugees are many of Iraq’s professionals, doctors, and teachers, who could have helped build a better future for all in Iraq.

The region around Mosul and Nineveh, writes Magister, is the “cradle of Christianity in Iraq. There are churches and monasteries that go back to the earliest centuries. ... Aramaic, the language of Jesus, is used in the liturgies.”

As the war has dragged on, life has become hellish for the remaining Chris-

tians. Yet they have never resorted to bombings or assassinations.

Father Ragheed is neither the first nor last of the Iraqi martyrs. When Pope Benedict gave his speech in Regensburg touching on Islam, Fr. Paulos Iskander was kidnapped and beheaded in retaliation by the “Lions of Islam.” Fr. Joseph Petros was also murdered. A Catholic nun told the Vatican news agency Fides, “The imams preach in the mosques that it is not a crime to kill Christians. It is a hunting of men.”

In May, St. George’s Assyrian Church in the Dora neighborhood, a Christian enclave of Baghdad, was burned down, destroying what had survived a fire-bombing in 2004. The Assyrian International News Agency reports it was the 27th church destroyed by Muslim gangs since the liberation of Iraq.

Now the ancient practice of the *jizya*, the “head tax” Muslims have traditionally imposed on Christians, Jews, and religious minorities, is being reinstituted. According to AINA, “Al Qaeda is demanding that Christians pay 250,000 dinars (around \$200) for the right to remain in their own homes, a sum equivalent to an average month’s salary in Iraq.”

All this, and the news of Father Ragheed’s murder, moved Benedict XVI to raise the issue with President Bush. For when Bush left the Vatican he told reporters, “He [the Pope] is worrisome about the Christians inside Iraq being mistreated by the Muslim majority. ... He was concerned that the society that was evolving would not tolerate the Christian religion.”

For the martyrdom of Christianity in its birth cradle, blame must fall heavily upon the men who conceived this misbegotten war. ■

We Are the War Party

Congressional Republicans who doubt the Bush Doctrine face a primary purge.

By W. James Antle III

WHEN PRAISING one of his colleagues, Congressman Walter Jones is quick to commend steady commitment to principle. It's a trait he knows something about. Since winning his House seat in 1994, the seven-term North Carolina Republican has been one of the most reliable Christian conservatives in Washington. "I'm just doing the best I can with every day God gives me," Jones drawls. But back home, some members of his party worry that he has changed.

On one issue, at least, Jones clearly has. The steadfastly pro-military congressman—his district houses a fifth of the Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune—drew headlines and appreciative chuckles from talk-radio listeners when he had French fries renamed "freedom fries" on congressional menus to protest France's opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. But Jones didn't limit his support for the troops to publicity stunts. He wrote letters to the families of over 2,000 servicemen killed in Iraq and attended the memorial services of fallen Marines. These tasks, combined with growing doubts about prewar intelligence, turned Jones into his party's most impassioned opponent of the war—and perhaps the most legislatively active.

Jones co-sponsored legislation setting a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq. He has also introduced a joint resolution stating that any expansion of the war into Iran must be expressly authorized by Congress. Not everyone is happy with his change of heart on Iraq, however. Onslow County Commissioner Joseph McLaughlin has decided to challenge him in next year's Republican primary.

"Since 1994, I have been a Walter Jones supporter," McLaughlin said in an announcement speech. "But it just cannot be that the congressman from the 3rd district, which probably has more troops in the fight than any other district in the country, would have more in common with Nancy Pelosi and the rest of the Democrats than with the Republican leadership." His candidacy already has prominent supporters. "Disloyalty is something you just can't tolerate," Onslow County GOP Chairman Ronald Cherubini told *The Politico*. "That's the way military people look at it. As a party, we have sent [Jones] a letter saying we cannot support you anymore..."

The Jones-McLaughlin contest is one of several races across the country that will test whether the Republican Party will tolerate dissent on the Iraq War. The handful of antiwar GOP legislators has always faced tremendous pressure within the party. Now they are increasingly facing primary challengers.

Congressman Wayne Gilchrest has represented Maryland's first district for nine terms. Like Jones, the Vietnam combat veteran voted both to authorize the war and to end it. He opposed the surge and has backed timetables for pulling our troops out of Iraq. Gilchrest has defeated 23 primary opponents since 1990, but this time he is likely to face three-term state Sen. Andy Harris, who will be able to compete for the support of party regulars. Harris, a former commanding officer at the John Hopkins Naval Reserve Medical Unit, will challenge Gilchrest on the war.

"I'm not one who's become part of the Washington fabric that led to our problems in 2006," Harris told local reporters. "Returning to the viewpoint of Ronald Reagan—strength, not surrender, decreasing the size of government, decreasing taxes—that's the true conservative base."

And the conservative base still by and large supports the Iraq War. While Republican antiwar sentiment has grown, 59 percent of GOP voters told CBS News that they opposed a timetable for withdrawal. By contrast, 65 percent of independents and 83 percent of Democrats are in favor. This jarring disconnect explains why some Republicans are working to solidify the party's pro-war stance even as the rest of the electorate is moving in the opposite direction.

The most spirited primary fights may involve the two most visible Republican critics of Bush's Iraq policies, one of whom is rumored to be weighting a presidential run while the other is already in the race. Nebraska Atty. Gen. Jon Bruning has declared his intention to take on Sen. Chuck Hagel, while several candidates are said to be pondering a bid against Congressman Ron Paul—including former Paul staffer Eric Dondero.

A Hagel-Bruning race would not be a gentlemanly contest between two Midwesterners. In his announcement, Bruning said there was "no doubt that we're at war with an enemy who will stop at nothing to defeat and kill us" and fighting al-Qaeda in Iraq is "the most important issue of our time." That's why, he contin-

ued, “Nebraskans want a leader who will stand with our troops and military commanders.”

Hagel’s staff hit back hard. “For Jon Bruning, who has never served his country in uniform, to question Chuck Hagel’s commitment to the troops is an insult to the troops and to the intelligence of the people of Nebraska,” the senator’s political director told reporters. “Mr. Bruning is in over his head.”

A race between Ron Paul and Eric Dondero might get just as heated. Dondero launched his campaign on the conservative RedState blog after Paul’s exchange with Rudy Giuliani in the South Carolina GOP presidential debate. Dondero called his former boss “a complete nutcase” whose foreign-policy views are “near treasonous.” Paul’s spokesman shot back that the would-be challenger was a disgruntled, fired ex-staffer who was “looney-tunes.”

“Ron Paul might face some frivolous challenges,” says libertarian Republican activist William Westmiller. “I’m not sure [Dondero] has the resources to take him on.” But if he doesn’t, Friendswood City Councilman Chris Peden might. Peden has already formed an exploratory committee.

Even milder GOP Iraq critics are under fire. Conservative radio talk-show host Todd Long has declared against Congressman Ric Keller in Florida. Keller voted for the war and merely supported a non-binding resolution against this year’s troop surge, though admittedly his speech on the subject—he compared the situation in Iraq to a poorly maintained lawn—was not Churchillian in its eloquence. Another anti-surge Republican, Congressman Bob Inglis of South Carolina, has several state legislators pondering primary challenges.

If the ranks of antiwar Republicans have barely grown since public opinion began shifting, this ferocious response

may be the reason. When the Democrats gave Jones and other antiwar GOP congressmen some of their allotted time to speak against the surge, *The Weekly Standard*’s Matthew Continetti warned about “Move-On Republicans” (in reference to the left-wing group), whose rhetoric is “indistinguishable from that of the antiwar Democrats.”

The 17 GOP congressmen who voted against the surge—or for a “defeatist resolution,” as the single-issue hawks prefer to put it—were swiftly denounced as “White Flag Republicans” by a group called the Victory Caucus. Although it doesn’t have the resources of the anti-tax Club for Growth or various social conservative organizations, outfits like the Victory Caucus hope to play a similar role in pushing incumbents to adopt the party’s majority viewpoint.

From their perspective, it makes a certain amount of sense. Putting Republican incumbents on notice that they may lose their seats if they vote for tax increases or against abortion restrictions has pulled the party to the right on both of those issues. Given that the GOP’s presidential field shows more flexibility on taxpayer funding of abortion than foreign policy, why not adopt similar tactics with regard to Iraq?

The Club for Growth became a formidable political force by accumulating a certain number of GOP incumbents’ scalps. To exert similar political pressure, especially while swing voters are trending antiwar, the Victory Caucus actually has to score some victories. Do any of the Republican Iraq skeptics seem particularly vulnerable?

Paradoxically, single-issue groups fare best when taking on candidates who are out of step with the party on multiple issues. Arlen Specter is a frequent target because he is to his party’s left on taxes, racial preferences, and tort reform as well as abortion. George Voinovich, on the other hand, may be

soft on taxes but he is solidly pro-life. Similarly, conservative antiwar Republicans may be able to protect their right flank on other issues. Neither John Duncan of Tennessee nor Howard Coble of North Carolina, whose non-Iraq voting records would please most conservatives, has primary opponents.

The original six House Republicans who voted against the war were evenly divided between conservatives with noninterventionist sympathies and Rockefeller liberals. Although only Paul and Duncan remain, this ratio has basically held. Gilchrest is to the left of his Eastern Shore district, a Republican enclave in a Democratic state. He will have trouble on abortion and gay rights as well as Iraq. Hagel’s voting record is mostly conservative, but he has been making noises about leaving the Senate—and the GOP. His opponent has wisely made the incumbent’s support for amnesty a major campaign issue. Both Paul and Jones, however, are well to their declared challengers’ right.

More importantly, Republican politicians will eventually modify their positions if Iraq is a net vote loser. In the Senate, that may already be happening. Sam Brownback is pushing troop reductions. Five GOP senators, including party loyalist Lamar Alexander, have introduced a bill that would enact the Iraq Study Group’s recommendations. And if antiwar Republicans fare better at the ballot box than their hawkish brethren, that will also be noticed—though so far, as former Sen. Lincoln Chafee and ex-Congressman John Hostettler can attest, that hasn’t happened.

In the meantime, the hawks are looking for their own Ned Lamont. And Walter Jones is out to remind them: Ned Lamont lost. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

True Believer

Bush's commitment to amnesty isn't political but personal, which is why he's willing to buck the conservative base.

By Timothy P. Carney

AFTER HIS "comprehensive immigration reform" package stalled in the Senate, President Bush remained defiant: "I'll see you at the bill signing,"

He may not win this fight—and stands to lose a sizeable constituency if he persists. By pushing this debate for the third straight year, and by relentlessly lobbying for his amnesty and guest-worker provisions, the president has helped fracture the already ailing conservative base and alienate much of his dwindling support.

National Review Online, Bush's most reliable booster among the media in the run-up to his 2004 re-election, now dedicates most of its home page to agitating against Bush on the issue of immigration. Other conservatives who stood by Bush throughout his Iraq struggles, such as *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan, have been driven so far from the president by his strident stance on immigration that they are retrospectively questioning the war and much of the agenda he has pushed for six-plus years.

In the face of this doubt, Bush has dug in his heels and stuck his thumb in the eye of his critics—most of whom are his usual allies. He has alleged that the opponents of his immigration bill "don't want to do what's right for America." He has summoned Republican lawmakers to the White House, leaning on them to support the bill. Senior Adviser Karl Rove has told border hawk

Tom Tancredo to never "darken the door of the White House" again. While Bush put up only a perfunctory fight on other tough issues such as Social Security overhaul and tax reform, on immigration he is unleashing his full arsenal.

This raises the question: just what is motivating Bush and the Republican establishment to fight so hard for this "reform" that could cost the president and the party so much?

Is it about politics? That's a safe assumption about any policy push as long as Karl Rove is in the White House. This is what many Hill Republicans tell angry conservatives off the record, and it's a trump card for the bill's supporters: if you Tancredoize the GOP, you'll turn it into a permanent minority as demographics shift.

Former Republican National Chairman Ken Mehlman and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush recently argued in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that the bill would help "build the Republican Party." They wrote, "We believe this legislation will be good for the GOP."

This line usually sparks a furious debate: will this legislation really help Republicans? The argument is difficult to settle. The Bushes point to J.D. Hayworth's loss in 2006 and California's descent to blue after GOP support for Proposition 187. Conservative border hawks point out that more Hispanic voters, even if the GOP wins 40 percent of them, means more Democratic votes

and that a fractured base is not good for the GOP.

The more relevant—and perhaps more answerable—question when Mehlman writes, "[w]e believe this legislation will be good for the GOP," is: does he really believe that? If we infer the most likely meaning—that Hispanics will become more Republican—Mehlman's actions when he ran the RNC suggest that he doesn't actually accept his own argument.

There are 21 current congressional districts that were majority Hispanic in the 2000 Census. All are represented by Democrats, which Mehlman might explain by pointing to Pete Wilson and the GOP's historic treatment of Hispanics. But if the GOP has a good message to offer to Hispanics, why isn't it even running candidates in Hispanic districts? Of those 21 districts, the GOP fielded no candidate in 6 of them, and provided no funding for 14 more. The only candidate to receive any support from the national party, incumbent Congressman Henry Bonilla, lost in 2006.

Of the 42 districts that are one-third or more Hispanic, 36 elected Democrats in 2006. Excepting Bonilla's district, none of those 36 Democrats received a serious GOP challenge last year—much less one on which Ken Mehlman's RNC or National Republican Congressional Committee was willing to spend a dime. If Mehlman really believed that "Hispanic Americans are

natural Republicans,” as he wrote in the *Journal*, he would have at least run serious candidates in these districts. Howard Dean sent Democrats to run in Republican districts in the belief that people in Indiana would see that not all Democrats have horns, which could yield seats in the long run and provide some pleasant surprises in the short run. Mehlman could have tried that in East L.A. or along the Rio Grande. He didn’t.

The Republican establishment knows that the party’s future depends not only on winning over voters but winning over and keeping donors. Of course, an outsider can only guess as to what Bush, Rove, and Mehlman are hearing from their high-dollar donors. But it’s a safe bet that they’re not calling for a border fence.

Profile an American who would benefit the most from guest-worker programs and liberalized immigration laws: he would be wealthy, working in a skilled job, and he would employ or sell to immigrants—or both. Then look at George W. Bush’s top donors: they all match that profile.

In 2004, the Center for Responsive Politics compiled a list of the Bush campaign’s “Rangers” and “Pioneers”—those supporters who had solicited the most contributions. The Ranger who gave the most to Republicans (\$2 million) was Richard Farmer of Cincinnati, Ohio. Farmer is the chairman of Cintas Corporation, the top uniform supplier in the United States. Cintas employs more than 30,000 people to wash, make, and deliver uniforms for rent or for sale—what the *San Francisco Chronicle* describes as a “mostly immigrant” workforce.

Some of Cintas’s workers, it appears, may be working in the U.S. illegally. In 2006, the company suspended 14 workers who could not remedy the discrepancy between their names and the

names associated with the Social Security numbers they provided.

In both the 2004 and 2006 elections, the top contributor to Republican causes was developer Bob Perry, owner of Perry Homes and board member of the Texas Chamber of Commerce. Perry has doled out \$17 million to Republican 527s in the last two cycles. In August 2006, Perry signed a *Dallas Morning News* op-ed with other Texas business leaders supporting Bush’s amnesty-cum-guest-worker plan.

In 2004, the second-biggest 527 donor on the GOP side was Alex Spanos, himself an immigrant, and also one of the top developers in California.

Any list of top Republican donors includes Jerry Perenchio (with \$5 million, the second-most prolific 527 donor in 2006), founder of Univision, the Spanish-language television station that lags only the “Big Four” (ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC) in viewership and actually outpaces WB and UPN.

Some of these men have strong ties with the Bush clan. They are not only GOP donors, but they are also friends and peers of the president and of the party’s leaders. This is the inside circle of the GOP, and it doesn’t look like the average group of red-state Republicans. These men all get more workers, cheaper workers, and more business when there is more immigration.

But the most uncharitable interpretation—that the businessmen support amnesty and guest workers simply for profit, and Bush does their bidding in exchange for their donations—is probably a mischaracterization. Like George W. Bush, these men feel that when they hire immigrants, they are helping the workers—washing uniforms at Cintas may not be a dream job, but it’s likely better than anything Chihuahua has to offer—and providing lower prices for consumers. Like George W. Bush, the GOP elites think

that more legal immigrants are “what’s good for America.”

These elites assault the motives of skeptics probably because the Perrys and Bushes of the world suffer almost none of the downside of mass immigration. Their jobs or wages are not threatened, their children or grandchildren are not in public schools under the stress of mass immigration, and they don’t live in the neighborhoods or ride buses populated by angry and violent gangs of alienated immigrant youths.

With all of these negatives nearly hidden from his view, it’s unsurprising that President Bush would so ardently lobby for amnesty and guest-worker provisions despite the political costs. It doesn’t take too much mind reading to assume he knows how unpopular these provisions are, but that doesn’t shake his view that they are right.

And not only does he see the upside from a business standpoint, Bush also looks at the issue from a Christian perspective. Most American Catholic leaders, especially Cardinal Roger Mahoney in Los Angeles, Christian teachings, such as the story of the Good Samaritan, and Christian ideals, such as charity and forgiveness, drive many believers to support amnesty.

If Bush’s views on the issue come from deeply held beliefs, it’s no surprise that dissent—even from his loyal base—hasn’t shaken him. Speaking about the Iraq War in 2006, the president told a reporter, “Look, I’m going to do what I think is right, and if people don’t like me for it, that’s just the way it is.”

George W. Bush and his friends likewise believe amnesty and guest-worker programs are the right thing to do—and that’s just the way it is. ■

Timothy P. Carney is the author of The Big Ripoff: How Big Business and Big Government Steal Your Money.

Hidden Wounds

More veterans survive Iraq, but the war's signature injury isn't immediately apparent.

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos

WHEN SAMUEL VAUGHAN WILSON III speaks, he periodically stops midsentence to rub his jaw, still pained by the rocket-propelled grenade that ripped through his vehicle, grazing his face and singeing the nerves inside his mouth. It was one of several close calls during that year in Afghanistan: after one IED attack, he recalls with a medic's precision how, under heavy gunfire, he cut open an Afghan police officer's throat to clear an air passage, saving his life. He says with equal sobriety that his Army career is over.

"My father wants me to get screening [for Traumatic Brain Injury]. He thinks something is wrong," said Wilson, who served as a combat medic in Afghanistan with the 508th Parachute Infantry, survived four IED incidents, numerous fire-fights, and that RPG near miss. According to the recommendation for his Army Commendation Medal, Wilson was credited, in one incident, with saving eight lives and maintaining his composure under "the most extreme circumstances in a combat environment." But in September 2006, he left the military after 11 years under a rare medical discharge for post-traumatic stress disorder.

He now struggles to understand where his physical injuries leave off and the mental ones begin. His anger, restlessness, and sleepless nights are classic symptoms of both mild TBI and PTSD, which are provoked regularly during his day job as an emergency paramedic in Northern Virginia. "We've looked into it," he said, of possible TBI screening, "but I've gotten nowhere in the VA system yet."

Red-headed Wilson, 36, says he looks like Howdy Doody, but nothing about him is funny. The black ID bracelet of a platoonmate killed in action firmly around his wrist, he is at one turn intimidating and dark, at another vulnerable, self-deprecating, and visibly wracked with survivor's guilt. He's outrun death, but doesn't quite feel alive.

"I love the Army—I was born and raised in it," Wilson said, reflecting, not for the first time, on his lineage, which includes a grandfather, (Ret.) Lt. Gen. Samuel Vaughan Wilson Sr., who as one of "Merrill's Marauders" fought behind enemy lines in Burma in World War II. The grandson isn't the first in his family to bring home PTSD along with medals for valor. His haunted nocturnal pacing when he returned from Afghanistan forced his father, (Ret.) Army Lt. Col. Samuel Vaughan Wilson Jr., to face down a reappearance of his own demons, left over from the rice-paddy wars a generation ago.

"He and I walked in each other's shoes if you will. His war was very similar to mine in that we both dealt with combat that was asymmetrical—at the least expected moments, [the fighting] would flare up," said the elder Wilson, an infantry officer in Vietnam in the early 1970s.

But one major difference between his war in the Mekong Delta and his son's in Kandahar is that, thanks to improvements in body armor and emergency medical response, today the military is bringing more soldiers and Marines home alive—battered, shattered, and transformed, but not in the body bags

that drove a nation to disenchanted departure from Southeast Asia.

Yet by the thousands, they are also returning with horrifying injuries, the most pervasive being the IED's especially vicious souvenir: traumatic brain injury. Symptoms range from memory loss, fatigue, irritability, mood swings, and a change in sleep patterns in milder cases to loss of co-ordination and balance, seizures, migraines, confusion, and agitation in more severe instances.

"TBI is going to be the worst story in terms of returning veterans," said Paul Sullivan, an advocate with Veterans for America. He estimates that anywhere from 160,000 to 320,000 servicemembers and veterans are suffering from some degree of TBI today, "most of which are unscreened, undiagnosed, and untreated."

Wilson's story is hardly rare. Physically, soldiers like him look healthy, but they come home changed, confused about their circumstances and often too ashamed to seek help. If they are still on active duty, they worry that their brain injury or PTSD will be mistaken for a pre-existing personality disorder, which could result in a bad discharge. They are anxious about getting a good disability rating when they leave the military, as statistics show the Army is lowballing ratings for PTSD, TBI, and other injuries, meaning there is a good chance all they will get from Uncle Sam is a severance check.

Once out, they face a long waiting list at the Veterans' Administration and a lack of mental healthcare access in rural

areas. Many contemplate or commit suicide, get divorced, leave their jobs, and even walk the streets, homeless.

"The idea of okay, cheer them up, wave the flag, bring them home, and forget about them ... we're going to be paying for this for the rest of their lives. It's going to be a horrible bill that we're going to pay," said Wilson's dad, now a high-school teacher in quiet Farmville, Virginia.

"If we've got any moral virtue left, we've got to pay it," he added. "We really didn't anticipate, as a country, and as a nation, the tremendous stresses on our medical system. It's a horrible thing."

But some people did anticipate it, and veterans from previous and current wars—call them "warriors for the wounded"—have been working endlessly and aggressively to ensure today's veteran isn't betrayed.

Take Sullivan, a Gulf War veteran who left his job as a senior researcher at the VA in March 2006, frustrated his distress signals were being ignored. "They went on record with the *Boston Globe* that I was 'alarmist,'" he said of a March feature on the perils of the VA system. "I had no other choice but to pull the alarm." The VA does not refute Sullivan's research but winces at his interpretation.

With an estimated 5.5 million veterans being treated at the nation's 1,400 hospitals and clinics each year—230,000 of them from Afghanistan and Iraq—and an estimated 470,000 more yet to move into a system that is experiencing a backlog of 400,000 disability claims and a six-month average wait for a medical appointment, it is hard not to see fire on the mountain.

"Everyone is giving lip service, but Walter Reed is just the tip of the iceberg," Sullivan said, referring to the recent scandal at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where soldiers were found languishing in moldy conditions, outflanked by a seemingly unsympa-

thetic bureaucracy. Surveying the hundreds of thousands of new claims coming in, staff shortages, inefficiencies, and the increased needs of older veterans, he declares, "The VA is in a crisis right now."

Enter TBI, which doesn't always render a person physically disabled and fully dependent but if left untreated, can devastate lives. Thousands of times in this war soldiers close to a bomb blast have shaken themselves off and walked away to patrol another day. Months later, they return home and do not recognize the face in the mirror.

"It's like slamming a laptop against the wall," said Patrick Campbell, 29, a National Guardsman who served in the 256th Infantry Brigade as a medic in Iraq from November 2004 to October 2005. While the computer may seem functional afterwards, small quirks like a broken backspace key or a jagged line down one side of the screen soon become obvious and render use slow, frustrating, and intolerable for the long term.

"The concussive event—the wind and the pressure changes—it's more damaging than the force of getting hit," said Campbell.

He will tell you that in a single incident, an IED explosion causes an intense shockwave of pressure. When close enough, it can form tiny, destructive air bubbles in the brain and blow out precious wiring inside a soldier's skull. Those not affected by the blast wave may be hurtled through the air, slammed around in a vehicle, or hit in the head with debris. Their Humvee might overturn. As described by some, any of this could throttle the brains like Jell-O.

In Vietnam, one soldier was killed for every 2.5 wounded; in Iraq the survival rate is one killed for every 16 wounded. But the effects of TBI may take hours, days—even weeks—to surface.

While at first glance Campbell looks as if he would be more comfortable in

an armored Humvee than a downtown D.C. office space, but it's soon clear his new posting is a good fit. Working full-time for the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, which is steadily becoming the generational equivalent of such scrappy advocates as the National Gulf War Resource Center or Vietnam Veterans of America, his goal is to cast a floodlight on TBI's effect on returning service members.

"There are a lot of people out there who have never been 'right' after an IED," said Campbell, recalling one case in which a veteran had to carry around a notebook to write down everything he did, said, or had to accomplish because his short-term memory was shot. "Now they are at home and wondering why they are different."

He recalls his own multiple "concussive events" in Iraq. One, an IED blast, left his ears bleeding and he and his buddy laughing over their luck. He went right back on patrol. Today, he plans to take advantage of the new mandatory TBI screening at the VA, wondering if those events contributed to his own diagnosis of PTSD.

"Not all people want to acknowledge that they have a problem. The symptoms are extremely close to PTSD," which still carries a stigma, particularly among peers and the chain of command. It took Campbell a year and losing his best friend over his changed personality to finally seek help.

Thanks to lobbying efforts by groups like the IAVA, the VA announced in April that it will begin screening all incoming veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan for TBI. Now the pressure is on the Department of Defense, which only offers comprehensive TBI screening for the wounded coming into their hospitals, like Walter Reed.

If TBI is the silent affliction of this war, the casualty count should be the canary in the coal mine. As of mid-May,

the military in Iraq suffered 14,804 injuries that required medical transport off the battlefield. This included 7,628 combat wounded and 7,176 non-hostile injuries, plus 19,589 “diseases,” which cover everything from a bacterial infection and mental disorder to cancer and pregnancy, that also required medical air transport. In Afghanistan, 6,213 injured soldiers were evacuated from the field, including 743 combat-related, 1,458 non-hostile, and 4,012 diseases.

Symptoms of TBI can turn up in any of these categories. According to various reports, of the 1.4 million who have rotated through Iraq and Afghanistan, anywhere from 10 to 30 percent have been exposed to a bomb blast or other head trauma, leaving them with at least mild TBI. A recent study by doctors at Fort Carlson Army base in Colorado found that 18 percent of their returning soldiers had incurred a brain injury in Iraq.

OF THE 1.4 MILLION WHO HAVE ROTATED THROUGH IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, 10 TO 30 PERCENT HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO A BOMB BLAST OR OTHER HEAD TRAUMA.

Some 60 percent of the veterans in the VA's Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center in Tampa, Florida, one of 21 centers handling vets with severe, multiple injuries, have a brain injury, according to ABC newsman Bob Woodruff in a February series he put together after his own year-long recovery from an IED blast. Meanwhile, officials at the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, the military's primary research and treatment facility for TBI, has treated 2,130 patients since 2003.

“That's just a small percentage of the total number, and the fact is, nobody really knows how many have mild [TBI],” said Col. Jonathan Jaffin, Commander of U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command at Fort Detrick,

Maryland and a spokesman for the DVBIC. He said 70 percent of their cases are mild and those affected may, with the right treatment, recover or at least adjust to their disabilities. But it is not clear, according to doctors, how soldiers with cumulative concussive injuries will fare long-term. All seem to agree the body of research on non-fatal blast injuries is thin.

“Mild head injury for years had been somewhat neglected,” Jaffin says, with standard testing for TBI often missing less severe cases. “So people would be suffering and being told they are normal.” As the pervasiveness of TBI among returning service members became clear, he said, the military and VA began developing better ways to detect it—though advocates will dispute their commitment.

VA officials say they are treating nearly 400 veterans diagnosed with moderate to severe TBI, while overall

they have seen more than 1,600 potential cases since 2002. They acknowledge, however, that the system has yet to compile statistics for mild cases or outpatients.

Meanwhile, symptoms of mild to moderate TBI go unchecked, crowded out by the more obvious injuries. Furthermore, misdiagnosing TBI—most likely mistaken for PTSD—is commonplace.

“When it does occur, PTSD and TBI together can be especially difficult to spot. The problem lies in the overlapping symptoms—increased anxiety, short attention span, limited concentration, problems with memory. This overlap muddles things up,” points out Ilona Meagher, author of *Moving a Nation to*

Care: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and America's Returning Troops. “Once you have these kinds of errors on military records,” she added, “it creates a whole other level of problems down the road for the veteran after they've returned home.”

That road is paved with the stories of men and women who find that the system is no more compassionate than it was for their counterparts returning from Vietnam a generation ago. The PTSD label is not only stigmatizing, but its symptoms are often mistaken for personality disorders and are blamed for behavioral problems like insubordination and substance abuse, resulting in a one-way ticket out of the military with no retirement pay or benefits.

“This time it's all about money—they just don't want to pay,” insists Sullivan. But unlike previous wars, there is a small army of veterans' advocates, many who cut their teeth on behalf of Persian Gulf soldiers in the 1990s.

Steve Robinson, also with Veterans for America, packed his experience and reputation along with his bags and spent most of May around Fort Carson, pulling together a massive case accusing the command of erroneously discharging 276 soldiers for personality disorders. These servicemembers all suffered from PTSD, and many had accompanying TBI diagnoses. His organization is also investigating more than 40 current cases on the base. They include bad discharges but also complaints from soldiers that their brain injuries and mental-health problems were mishandled or ignored by superiors.

Robinson, who has been working tirelessly as an advocate since his own stint in the Persian Gulf War, helped to attract a delegation of congressional staff who met in a closed-door briefing with spouses. His work also brought on a Government Accountability Office probe.

Spc. Paul Thurman, 24, is part of that investigation. After two head injuries incurred during training at Fort Bragg and in Kuwait, even under heavy medication he struggles daily with uncontrollable shaking, intense headaches, short-term memory loss, twitching, and the threat of seizures. His moment of terror came when he suffered a seizure and threw up during a meeting with an Army lawyer.

He was waiting for his medical evaluation and discharge at Fort Carson when he was given an Article 15—the non-judicial punishment meted out by a commander for minor disciplinary offenses—for cussing and walking off formation when he was told he couldn't get his seizure medication at the onset of an episode.

Robinson and company took up Thurman's case because they say he should not have been deployed after the first head injury. He had been diagnosed with lesions on the brain. "These guys came forward and said, look, you can't push this dude around. They've been unbelievably helpful," Thurman said of Robinson's crew. "They know how to care for us."

Thurman's only mode of transportation before he joined the military at the age of 18 was a bicycle. He thought, cycling daily past the recruitment center, that the service would give him a job and his life direction. Now he can't find a job because he can't drive a car and the seizures aren't a selling point with employers. He's tired of the emergency room—particularly how he is made to feel that he's done something wrong—and he's scared that talking about it will put his final discharge status at risk.

Fort Carson says there is another side to these stories. While the base hasn't denied struggling with TBI and PTSD—which according to reports has increased from 32 cases to 539 in the last

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is angry at remarks made to media sources by David Wurmser, an aide to Vice President Cheney.

Wurmser said that Cheney is still in favor of bombing Iran and is working assiduously on President Bush to get him on board. Per Wurmser, Cheney fully expects the Bush White House to "disarm" Iran before elections in 2008 if diplomacy fails, which he expects will be the case. Wurmser's remarks made the diplomatic circuit in Europe and led IAEA Director Muhammad ElBaradei to recommend the diplomatic option and tell Rice that the "crazies" should not be allowed to drag the U.S. into another war. Another leading warmonger is undoubtedly *Commentary* editor-at-large Norman Podhoretz, whose essay "The Case for Bombing Iran" compares Iran to Nazi Germany and concludes that "as an American and as a Jew," he prays that President Bush will find the strength to attack Iran. To make his and Podhoretz's case, Cheney continues to support efforts to implicate Iran in the killing of American soldiers, presumably in search of a *casus belli* that would resonate with the public.

In the last few weeks, Cheney's staff has become more intensively involved in the Afghanistan Interagency Operating Group.

During the group's weekly meetings, Cheney staffers have focused on a single issue: recent intelligence reports alleging that Iran is supplying weapons to Afghanistan's resurgent Taliban. As the weapons are being used against U.S. forces, the allegation meshes nicely with similar unsubstantiated claims being made about Iranian arms in Iraq. The only problem with the allegation of Tehran's involvement is that there is considerable evidence that weapons of Iranian origin are freely available in central Asian arms markets and are not necessarily being supplied to insurgents by Tehran.

On another front, Rice had some success in bringing about the demise of the Iran-Syria Policy and Operations Group,

an interagency co-ordination committee reportedly headed by National Security Council Deputy Elliott Abrams that has been working to destabilize the Iranian regime. Under Secretary of State Nick Burns informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in writing on May 29 that "The ISOG was established in March 2006 and disbanded in March 2007." While Vice President Cheney's office and many advocacy groups favor regime change in Iran, Rice recently said that the U.S. is instead forging an international coalition to pressure Iran to modify its behavior. She is being supported by Robert Gates at the Pentagon and by the intelligence community in her efforts, and this is now clearly U.S. policy, at least for the near term. But there are also reports that Cheney is seeking to do an end run around the policy by "narrowing Bush's options," apparently through David Wurmser's off-the record meetings with key players at the American Enterprise Institute regarding a media and think-tank "surge" to make a compelling case for war. As a trump card, Cheney believes that the Israelis might be willing to stage a limited attack on Iran to bring about Tehran's armed retaliation and inevitable American involvement.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

year there—officials say none of the soldiers chaptered out for personality disorders were suffering from severe PTSD or TBI. Rather, their behavior, backed by a pre-existing condition found in their backgrounds, got them booted.

Robinson said his group chose Fort Carson as the first in five fact-finding missions because it had the most documentation to back up the soldiers' claims. However, "these problems are system-wide."

The disability ratings game has become a gauntlet for soldiers suffering from myriad physical and mental injuries. At the head is the Physical Evaluation Board, which assesses whether an active servicemember is still fit for duty and rates individual disabilities to determine the type of discharge and whether it warrants lifetime healthcare and retirement pay. A rating of 30 percent or more allows the soldier to be medically discharged with pay and healthcare. Anything beneath that buys a single severance check—and a *U.S. News and World Report* investigation found that nearly 93 percent of disabled troops were receiving low ratings.

The Veterans Disability Benefits Commission is reviewing these charges, and in April, it offered Congress some preliminary data that compared combined disability ratings from both the DoD and VA. The numbers showed that 81 percent of all disabilities between 2000 and 2006 were rated 0 to 20 percent by DoD. Out of 50,676 Army soldiers deemed unfit for duty, 27 percent received 0 percent ratings.

What is more striking are the differences between DoD and the VA, which uses its own ratings to assess healthcare and compensation. Focusing on comparative data for both institutions, the commission found that 59 percent of the time, DoD would give a soldier a combined rating of 0 to 30 percent, while the

VA would take that same soldier and give him a rating of 30 to 100 percent. The disparity in specific mental health ratings were even more glaring.

VDBC chairman James Terry Scott told the Senate on April 12, "It is ... apparent that DoD has strong incentive to assign less than 30 percent so that only separation pay is required and continuing family health care is not provided."

"We're very concerned," said Ron Smith, deputy general counsel for the Disabled American Veterans. His job is to represent veterans appealing their disability ratings. He is not lacking for work. He said lowballing typically hits low-ranking servicemembers who get smaller severance payments and are likely to spend them more quickly. Then there is a lengthy gap before their new claims at the VA are processed.

"They are playing fast and loose with disability ratings," charged Larry Scott, a staunch advocate who runs VAWatchdog.com, noting that victims of PTSD and mild to moderate TBI are more likely than others to get the bureaucratic boot out the door.

At the end of this bottleneck, there is the VA system, where Vaughan Wilson waits today. After nearly nine months, the medication for PTSD given to him following his discharge from the Army is nearly gone. His six months of free health coverage through the military has expired, and even when he had it, he had no luck in finding a PTSD counselor in rural Virginia, where he was staying with his dad for the first few months of civilian afterlife.

Beset by ongoing nightmares, bouts of panic and fury, Wilson is slowly getting his life on track—he and his fiancée Joy are expecting a baby in October—but he knows he needs treatment, including a much delayed screening for TBI. Built to carry a soldier's legacy, he looks anything but weak or insecure, but his eyes are sad and he's wound like

a top. He's no fool—he has collected affidavits concerning his many commendations, his medical evaluations, and photos of carnage if anyone tries to question the validity of his story.

"The most frustrating thing for me are the reasons my claim has been held up," he said, noting one case in which he mistakenly provided the wrong Social Security number for his daughter on the forms. "The people I've encountered at the VA are doing the best they can ... but there is too much of a paper trail" to manage and the bureaucracy is too massive, too tricky to navigate. "The disconnect was, there wasn't a good handoff from the military to the VA," he noted.

That disconnect is just one of the challenges facing the VA, which has treated nearly one in three returning veterans since the war on terror began. There is an average six-month wait for an initial appointment and four-month wait for disability claims. Appeals stretch over an additional year and a half, according to a March GAO report.

"I'm not a hate-the-VA guy," said Scott. "I've been in the system for 26 years and have gotten nothing but great care. ... [but] we've been fighting a war on the cheap and we are trying to care for our wounded on the cheap, too."

VA officials say the new TBI screening is only a piece of an overall effort to improve diagnosis and treatment, reduce the backlogs, and close the VA-military gap. Paul Sullivan said advocates like himself will be there to make sure they make good, particularly on promises to respond to the challenges of TBI.

Ignoring brain injury while it destroys veterans won't do, he said. "We will try to put people in jail this time if they try to go that route." ■

Kelley Beaucar Vlahos is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance reporter.

Pro-Life Warmongers

Truly remarkable are those uncompromising foreign-policy moralists on the Right who boast of “clarity” yet manage to make generous allowances for moral

compromise in the conduct of war. Their certitude of the justice of the cause is matched only by their willingness to condone assaults on innocent life and human dignity.

“War is all about moral compromise,” wrote columnist Dean Barnett in an article defending the use of torture. Of the World War II fire-bombings of cities that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians, Barnett added, “While all these actions were terrible, they were also necessary. And justifiable.” The heart of his argument? One war crime justifies another. Just before he wrote this, Barnett said, “I strongly feel that abortion is the taking of an innocent life.” Some lives, it would seem, are more innocent than others.

Barnett’s article elicited condemnation from some on the Right, but his attitudes toward torture, mass bombings and, of course, the war in Iraq are widely shared by Republican politicians and pundits. Where some still insist on euphemisms or ignore the war’s essential brutality, Barnett spoke bluntly of his belief in the necessity of “cruelty” and “savagery.”

And if the positions of most GOP presidential candidates offer any indication, Barnett’s views are representative of the opinions of a considerable number of conservative elites. The recent Republican debates have been illuminating for what they tell us about the sorry state of much conservative thought. Should we torture people to gain information? Only two candidates—John McCain and Ron Paul—flatly objected.

The rest endorsed “enhanced interrogation techniques” or, in the case of Congressman Tom Tancredo, invoked 24’s primetime pain fetishist: “I’m looking for Jack Bauer at that time.” Rudy Giuliani said he would allow “every method [interrogators] could think of, and I would support them in doing it.” Should we use tactical nukes against Iran? “You don’t take any options off the table,” Jim Gilmore answered, echoing the views of most of his competitors. With the exception of Ron Paul, who argued that by “accept[ing] the principle of preemptive war, we have rejected the just war theory of Christianity,” the question of whether it was legitimate to launch aggressive attacks was never even considered.

Almost without argument, the Right has embraced the logic of total war and its corrosive corollary: dehumanization of the opposing side. Call it a “conservative” culture of death. Some lives are deemed worth protecting while others are expendable. Respect for human dignity is non-negotiable—until it becomes useful to violate it.

Thomas Sowell has written approvingly of the “annihilation of much of Germany and Japan,” and Charles Krauthammer has argued for the necessity of reducing Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki to “cinders.” During Israel’s war with Lebanon last year, Walter Williams could be found complaining about “our weak will” preventing American first strikes with nuclear weapons against “our Middle East enemies” in Syria and Iran, though he did allow that

there were probably “less drastic military options” available.

At the same time that war supporters boast of our great restraint, many chafe at the strictures imposed by traditional morality and common decency. They emphasize the difference between terrorists and us, but regret that we no longer target civilian populations with the ruthless efficiency of earlier times.

That noxious utilitarian calculus that reduces people to a mere means to an end—provided our wartime government is doing the reducing—seems untroubled by its unusual neighbor: the enduring conservative defense of the unborn. But then its support for President Bush’s policies has already taken the Right many places it never planned to go—down the treacherous paths of nation-building, democracy promotion, and fighting someone else’s civil war.

Grim headlines tally the practical toll of conservative complicity. The cost to the movement is still being counted, but acquiescing to the warfare state has already had a debasing effect on the moral imagination of the Right. Patriots have become nationalists, constitutionalists now defend arbitrary executive power, and pro-life conservatives champion what can only be called a culture of death.

What better reason to recover a traditionally conservative, healthy desire to limit and disperse the power of government, to reduce the temptations of abuse and limit the extent of the damage that can be done? Corruption of the moral imagination is not simply some temporary wartime excess with no lasting consequences. As morality falters, so does the capacity to cultivate and practice virtue and promote a culture of life at home. ■

Is That All There Is?

A revamped primary calendar will produce a quick winner—and leave voters unsatisfied.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

THE MIDTERM BALLOTS had hardly been counted when the 2008 presidential candidates commenced their two-year-long marathon. From televised debates to YouTube videos, a score of contenders angle for early advantage.

In the first quarter of 2007, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and Mitt Romney each took in well over \$20 million, breaking all previous records. In fact, the 2008 candidates have already raised a third of the total spent during the entire 1996 campaign.

But fundraising demands are not the only force tugging candidates onto the national stage. The accelerated primary season has also hooked them. Tired of watching from the sidelines as Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina get all the attention from the candidates and the media that trails them, several states have pushed their primaries to early February. The rest of the country wants their primary votes to count in a way they don't when the race is sewn up in a handful of early races.

In 2008, a majority of states will hold their primaries between Jan. 14 and Feb. 5, with Iowa contemplating a December date to retain its first-in-the-nation franchise. At least 20, and perhaps 22, states will allot delegates on the 5th alone, including such monster contests as New York, Michigan, Illinois, and Texas. By the same time in 2004, only nine states had combed over the candidates. What this all means to the nominating process is a matter of dispute.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger reasons that moving California's valuable primary from June to February will encourage candidates to pander to his constituents. The Golden State is considered a "tarmac trip" because candidates, both in the primary season and the general election, typically campaign there by flying from one media market to another and granting interviews from the runway. This is a considerable let-down from the door-to-door ritual reenacted every four years in Iowa and New Hampshire. While it is doubtful that California could ever achieve that living-room intimacy, moving the primary to Super Tuesday may have other benefits. Though it will cost California taxpayers an extra \$60 million to move ahead in line, the state's leadership is wagering that forcing presidential hopefuls to make costly federal promises—much as Iowa has extracted ethanol subsidies for years—will be worth the investment. In a March interview with *The Politico*, the governor explained his rationale: "Why is it we only get 79 cents back [in federal spending] on the dollar [that Californians pay in taxes]? We used to get 95 cents. ... We can turn this [early primary] into billions and billions of dollars."

Whether the plan will actually result in the courtship Schwarzenegger and company envision is unclear. Political analyst Roger Simon speculates, There may be so many contests on Feb. 5 ... that the candidates will have very little

time for any one state and the network anchors will probably just stay in New York City and sit in front of a big map."

The frontloaded calendar "has two aspects, both of which have been widely deplored," Hendrick Hertzberg wrote in *The New Yorker*:

One is the bunching of primaries, which magnifies the need to raise very big money very early, pretty much guarantees that dark horses will stay dark, and makes it harder for someone to enter the race late. The other is the time gap between de-facto nomination in February and de-jure election in November—as lengthy as a full-term pregnancy, and offering similar opportunities for fatigue, boredom, irritability, and nausea.

While it's doubtless that the length of the election cycle will strain the attention span of both the media and the public, recent political history hasn't shown dark-horse candidates doing especially well under the old system.

In recent times, only one true long shot successfully navigated the slower-paced primary season. Jimmy Carter's name recognition sat at 2 percent when he began carrying his own garment bag around Iowa in 1976, yet he finished second in the caucus to "uncommitted." But that year featured no obvious frontrunner, and Carter's legion opponents either dropped out early, were knocked down in key

states, or split the more liberal anti-Carter vote.

More recently, insurgent campaigns have consistently failed to overtake the candidates deemed most acceptable by party elders. In 1996, Bob Dole lost New Hampshire to Pat Buchanan, but having won Iowa and South Carolina, he held on after that initial setback. Similarly, in 2000, John McCain won the New Hampshire primary after a 200-stop blitz of retail-politics appearances throughout the state. He became a media sensation but lost his momentum in South Carolina before Bush rallied to win nine of 13 states on Super Tuesday. In 2004, Howard Dean brandished a strong anti-war message to challenge the vacillating voices at the head of the Democratic Party and was featured on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* just before the first contest. But he finished third in Iowa and failed to rally in New Hampshire. In presidential politics, surprise candidates have become mere foils in the establishment's story of conquest.

On the other hand, discussing Buchanan's 1996 run, Simon argues that the new schedule will make it easier for outsiders to crash the party. With over a month between that contest and Super Tuesday, Simon notes, "in those days, the establishment had time to rally. And on March 12, Dole easily beat Buchanan in all seven of the 'Super Tuesday' states holding contests that day. Back then, Super Tuesday was a classic firewall. If you got burned early, you had the time to gather your forces and beat out the flames."

This round, there is a strong chance that the primary season will end right at the beginning. Chuck Todd, political director for NBC News, thinks so: "If either Giuliani or Clinton win their respective caucuses, they will have essentially won the nomination. If Obama or Edwards can't beat Clinton in Iowa, they will have a hard time beating

her anywhere. Ditto for Mitt Romney, John McCain and Fred Thompson in their attempts to stop Giuliani. ... Iowa is a must-win for anyone not named Giuliani or Clinton."

If either of the New Yorkers prevails, the process of nominating a candidate—a rambling ordeal that used to take months and present contenders with a variety of challenges—may be over in just a few hours. So much for making more states, and therefore more people, relevant to the process.

Neither Clinton nor Giuliani currently leads in Iowa, however. John Edwards has spent over 40 days in the state since 2004 and shows signs of having locked up 25-30 percent of Democratic votes. Mitt Romney has dedicated almost a million dollars in media buys and battles for frontrunner bragging rights with John McCain.

But they may be using an outdated playbook. Rather than committing to the kind of handshake politics required to overcome their opponents' early leads, the revised calendar may allow

journalists are less likely to camp out in snowy Manchester than to file sun-soaked reports from Miami. Florida's Jan. 29 contest, with its 114 delegates, slips handily into the week between the New Hampshire primary and "Tsunami Tuesday," and its pricey media market locks out all but the heavy hitters.

In addition to offering an early delegate prize, the Sunshine State may give an accurate preview of how candidates will fare in the rest of the country. Todd notes, "the Southeast of the state mirrors the Northeast of the country; the Southwest of the state has a solid Midwestern feel; the Central part of the state is akin to the exurbs and Southwestern growth parts of the country; of course the Panhandle is the Deep South; and Key West is like San Francisco." Super Tuesday could well be a victory lap for Florida's winners.

The traditional hurdles of the nomination process tested candidates' strengths and exposed their weaknesses with rural voters in the Midwest and blue-collar workers in the Northeast.

IF EITHER OF THE NEW YORKERS PREVAILS, THE PROCESS OF NOMINATING A CANDIDATE—A RAMBLING ORDEAL THAT USED TO TAKE MONTHS AND PRESENT CONTENDERS WITH A VARIETY OF CHALLENGES—MAY BE OVER IN JUST A FEW HOURS.

celebrity candidates to skip Iowa altogether. Giuliani has announced that he won't participate in the Ames Straw Poll that precedes the caucus, and Mike Henry, a senior aide to the Clinton campaign, suggested in a leaked document that she "pull completely out of Iowa and spend the time and money in other states."

He doesn't necessarily mean New Hampshire—a political plum in years past. If Iowa traditionally reduced the field to the top three on each side, the Granite State cut deeper. But this cycle,

The contenders then met with their respective base-voters in South Carolina: Republicans courting conservative Christians and Democrats testing their positions in the black community.

A nationalized primary season promises a quick and decisive victory, but it may also mean a system in which the crucial votes are not cast by citizens who've looked into the candidates eyes and heard promises made in a neighbor's living room. The candidates will still court voters before Valentine's Day, but the romance is gone. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*La Vie en Rose*]

Edith Piaf: The Struggles of the Sparrow

By Steve Sailer

WHY IS THE “struggle with inner demons” such a staple of movies about musicians and actors?

Part of the reason is selection bias: producers aren’t dying to make “The Johann Sebastian Bach Story” because composing a new masterpiece for Sunday church services each week while fathering 20 children didn’t leave Bach much time for self-inflicted drama.

Nonetheless, on average, performers really do live more chaotic lives than the rest of us. The detective novelist and screenwriter Raymond Chandler explained in *The Little Sister*, his novel about a troubled actress, “If these people didn’t live intense and rather disordered lives, if their emotions didn’t ride them too hard—well, they wouldn’t be able to catch those emotions in flight and imprint them on a few feet of celluloid ...”

Nobody lived a more intense and disordered life than Edith Piaf (1915-63), the Parisian chanteuse depicted in the melodramatic and moving French film “*La Vie en Rose*.” While her contemporary Judy Garland became an icon to male homosexuals (the gay liberation movement began in 1969 when drag queens returning from Garland’s funeral

rioted at New York’s Stonewall bar), Piaf was a national heroine, as French as Johnny Cash was American.

Although many showbiz biopics punch up the drama with fiction, writer-director Olivier Dahan’s big problem was what to leave out to keep “*La Vie en Rose*” down to 140 minutes. Amusingly, he omitted World War II, which Piaf spent in German-occupied Paris. (The embarrassing reality is that while Piaf did help the Resistance, her career, like many French culturati’s, flourished during the Occupation, which was easier in Paris than elsewhere—the more civilized and Francophilic German officers tried to wangle assignments there.)

Many pop stars concoct hardscrabble mythologies to blur their privileged upbringings. For instance, the lead singer of the great leftist punk rock band The Clash gave himself the macho prole name Joe Strummer to obscure that he was the son of a diplomat. Piaf’s childhood, however, was the real thing.

Abandoned as an infant by her mother, a street singer and prostitute, Piaf was dumped by her father, a circus contortionist, with his madam mother to grow up in a bordello. When the little girl went blind from conjunctivitis, the whores with hearts of gold chipped in to send her on a pilgrimage to Lisieux to pray at the grave of St. Thérèse. Her sight restored, she began singing in her father’s street-corner act.

Dahan chopped up the storyline of “*La Vie en Rose*” chronologically, perhaps because Piaf’s life was such a string of catastrophes that a straightforward retelling would have left punch-drunk audiences giggling at the one-damn-thing-after-anotherness of it all.

At 18, she had an illegitimate child, who soon died, and she fell under the thumb of a pimp. Piaf was discovered

singing on the street at age 20 by a nightclub owner (played by the formidable Gerard Depardieu), but he was murdered and the police at first accused her. The great love of her life, middleweight world champion boxer Marcel Cerdan, died in a plane crash on his way to a rendezvous with her in New York. A painful car crash turned her into a morphine junkie, and cancer killed her at 47, before which she looked to be 80.

Perhaps due to childhood malnutrition, she only grew up to be 4’8”. (Despite being over ten inches taller, Marion Cotillard somehow portrays Piaf with spectacular verisimilitude.) Like Dick Cheney, her head inclined to the right. Out of this sparrow-like frame emerged an enormous voice, magnificent and nasally piercing, perfect for belting out “*Le Marseillaise*.”

In these days of easy electronic amplification, it seems strange that for centuries the great challenge to professional musicians was to generate enough sternum-vibrating volume to blast the full emotional and physical power of the music out to a large paying audience.

By the time of Piaf’s discovery in 1935, Bing Crosby had revolutionized singing by introducing a quieter, more conversational style suited to the microphone, but she mostly stood by the old loud mode. At her peak in the 1950s (despite all her woes, she continued to improve as an interpreter of songs), she could sound lovely, but the film chooses to emphasize her more stentorian style. To 21st-century audiences, Piaf might sound like a curiosity, a pocket-battleship Ethel Merman. Still, “*La Vie en Rose*” is one of the best musical biopics. ■

Rated PG-13 for substance abuse, sexual content, brief nudity, language, and thematic elements.

BOOKS

[*George Kennan: A Study of Character*, John Lukacs, Yale University Press, 207 pages]

An American For All Seasons

By Daniel McCarthy

GEORGE F. KENNAN (1904-2005) was and remains best known for the doctrine of containment. He was the man of the hour in 1947, when *Foreign Affairs* published "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" under the byline "X." His authorship of the essay, which heralded a sea change in America's posture toward the Soviet Union, didn't remain secret for long. He had become, in what is now his almost inescapable epithet, "the architect of the Cold War." Four years later, Truman crowned Kennan's career by naming him ambassador to the USSR.

Well before this, Kennan had a distinguished record in the Foreign Service: he had been part of the first staff at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in the '30s and served as deputy head of mission there from 1944-46. In the interim, he had been assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, where he was interned for six months after Germany declared war on the United States; in that crisis, he became *de facto* leader of the detained American diplomats. His "Long Telegram" from Moscow in 1946, which became the basis for "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," laid the cornerstone for America's Cold War strategy. After his return to the States in 1947, he became head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, with a hand in (among other things) the crafting the Marshall Plan. All this, and still more than half his life lay ahead of him.

In the 42 years between his last diplomatic post, as ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1961-63, and his death, Kennan

traveled, lectured, studied, and wrote—he wrote millions of words, in fact, for the public, for friends, and for himself: essays, books, letters, diaries. And his output had been hardly less prodigious during his years of government service. So copious are his literary remains, warns John Lukacs, that any future biographer will be overwhelmed. In his *Study of Character*, Lukacs himself has not attempted to give us a complete lexicon of Kennan's life; instead he has provided in this short book a Rosetta Stone with which to decipher the true character of the man and his thought amid the litter of slogans and hype that muddies public discourse.

We can't fail to have a better understanding of Kennan's thinking in years to come—if only because he is so widely misunderstood today. Containment, for example, was never meant to be a military doctrine, still less a game of nuclear brinksmanship. "This readiness to use nuclear arms," he wrote with uncharacteristic vehemence in "A Christian's View of the Arms Race," "is nothing less than a presumption, a blasphemy, an indignity—an indignity of monstrous dimensions—offered to God!" Nor was Kennan himself a right-wing Cold Warrior turned lefty peacenik. He recognized the distinct evils of communism and Russian nationalism from the beginning. But he didn't let those evils blind him to the danger of overreaction at home: "I tremble when I see this attempt to make a semi-religious cult out of emotional-political currents of the moment," he said of anticommunism in an address at the University of Notre Dame in 1953.

That appeal to reason at the height of the McCarthy era was, in Lukacs's estimation, one of Kennan's greatest moments; indeed, Lukacs reprints the entirety of that speech as an appendix to this book. Like Kennan, Lukacs was an anti-anticommunist yet not at all a man of the Left. A Hungarian refugee from communism, Lukacs has nonetheless always lambasted the nationalist fevers of the American Right. He is an able and sympathetic expositor of Kennan, a

friend with whom he corresponded for some 50 years. (A decade ago, Lukacs published a collection of their letters dealing with the dawn of the Cold War as *George F. Kennan and the Origins of Containment 1944-1946: The Kennan-Lukacs Correspondence*.)

Their few points of disagreement should sharpen readers' appreciation of both men's thoughts: Lukacs agrees with Kennan that Truman's hardened stance against the Soviet Union was, if anything, late rather than premature, but nonetheless believes that the U.S. had to make a close ally of Stalin during World War II. Kennan, by contrast, held that the U.S. was right to help the USSR against Germany militarily, but should not have extended anything like moral friendship. (What's the difference? Think of T.S. Eliot, no leftist, scotching the British publication of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* by Faber and Faber in 1944 lest Uncle Joe take offense—not that Lukacs would have behaved so shabbily.) And Kennan, unlike Lukacs, would not have advised the U.S. to get involved in the European war before Germany declared war on it, though he later acknowledged that the Holocaust would have been reason enough to intervene. Kennan's example belies the impression to which Lukacs's writing sometimes gives rise—that all opponents of the war were strident Anglophobic nationalists who afterwards became staunch anticommunists.

Lukacs sketches his subject's life and career succinctly and effectively; his book serves as a marvelous introduction to Kennan. But that is not its objective: this volume really is a study in character, "and by 'character,'" writes Lukacs, "I mean [Kennan's] *conscious* decisions, choices, acts and words, but nothing of his—so-called—subconscious; that is, no attributions of psychoanalytic categories, no ham-handed projections or propositions of secret or hidden motives." The author wants to communicate as much as possible the demonstrated essence of this man who, he writes, "not only represented but incarnated some of the best and finest traits of American character"

and to teach us not only that we ought to read Kennan but, more importantly, how to read him. As Lukacs is (a bit too) fond of saying—does he advert to this quote from Burckhardt in each of his 28 books? —*bisogna saper leggere*, “You must know *how* to read.”

That lesson begins with what we know of Kennan’s childhood, his “Lonely Youth” as Lukacs calls it, in Wisconsin, followed by his hardly gregarious college days at Princeton. He remained a steady, sober youth even after joining the Foreign Service in 1925. In life as in his writing, he had from the start a “curious combination of serious restraint and nervous energy.” The latter showed through, at intervals, in the frustration he expressed at seeing his advice go unheeded, his memos to superiors unread or un-followed. Lukacs gives several examples of policy essays almost as significant as his “Long Telegram” (although Lukacs may be exaggerating here) that met with neglect. Kennan himself wrote in his memoirs that he thought most of these memoranda ultimately did have an effect—albeit after a delay of two years or so.

His frustration boiled over one day in 1952, five months after he had become ambassador to the USSR, when a London reporter asked him how much contact American diplomats had with the Russian people. Kennan, reports Lukacs, “said that his isolation enforced in Moscow was comparable to how he was interned in Nazi Germany in 1941-42 after the declaration of war.” It was the end of his ambassadorship—the Soviets declared him *persona non grata* and did not even allow him to return to Russia to pick up his family, who were left to vacate the diplomatic residence without him.

Kennan had a devoted wife, three daughters, and a son, but in discussing Kennan’s private life, Lukacs returns to the theme of loneliness—not of the anti-social or maladjusted kind but rather the solitude that comes from a pensive nature and a “self-imposed separateness” from the din of 20th-century society. It was “a symptom of his character: but it could impress others as unduly rigid.” He did not suffer fools, particularly congressmen, gladly. Of the political fray, he wrote in his *Memoirs: 1950-1963*, “Where others saw a stage on which momentous issues were being dramatically resolved, I saw only a sordid, never-ending Donnybrook among pampered and inflated egos.” Likewise the manufactured sentimentality of popular culture grated on him even as a young man in the 1930s; after hearing in a Swiss casino a soppy pop tune with the lyrics “I’m dancing with tears in my eyes / for the girl in my arms isn’t you,” he wrote in his diary, “Don’t you think, really, there is something unnatural, something positively abnormal about a young man dancing around with tears in his eyes for such a reason?”

He had what all too many of his countrymen lacked, then and now: restraint, both in his personal life and in his public philosophy. Still—although Lukacs draws attention to the symbolism of his middle name, Frost—Kennan was not a cold man: his restraint clothed a deep humanity. Lukacs cites (but does not quote: quoting a writer as elegant as Kennan is dangerous stuff—where to stop?) Kennan’s

unselfconscious account, found in his travel memoir *Sketches From a Life*, of the flood of emotion he felt upon discovering his parents’ graves for the first time, relieved to find his mother (who died shortly after he was born) and father in adjoining plots. Lukacs writes a passage almost as poignant when he recounts his last meeting with the aged George and Annelise Kennan in 2004:

On a darkening winter afternoon I came to see them in their upstairs bedroom. His head, resting on a pillow, now had a kind of skeletal beauty; he could speak only little, forcing out a few words with increasing difficulty; near the foot of his bed she sat huddled in a wheelchair at a table, uttering a few sensible words, not many. I went out, crushed with sadness; and then Pamela, my wife-to-become, soothed me quietly: “They were together for so long; they are together now; in the same room; aware of each other; still alive.”

There is a *memento mori* here, a grim reminder that even great men are humbled before death—but there is also here a capsule of the human things that endure: loyalty, love, and memory.

Lukacs fears that for all his accomplishments, Kennan is little known or appreciated today. Perhaps so, but like Alexis de Tocqueville—to whose *Souvenirs* Lukacs compares Kennan’s *Sketches From a Life*, with much justice—Kennan may yet be more honored in death than in life. Lukacs’s marvelous book bids fair to make it so, and this volume is only the first flowering of what promises to be a wealth of posthumous Kennan scholarship. He will be written about for years to come, his writings collected and edited, reissued and reappraised. Ironically, for a man who lived so long, and who so often felt out of step with the machine age of the 20th century, George Kennan may yet belong to the future. ■

Daniel McCarthy is senior editor at ISI Books.

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[*The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City*, Dore Gold, Regnery, 384 pages]

The Case for Not Sharing

By Richard Silverstein

IF YOU'RE MICHAEL LEDEEN, you're going to love Dore Gold's *Fight for Jerusalem*. It is a fever dream of conspiracies about the global menace posted by al-Qaeda. To put Gold's thesis in brief, for Muslim extremists the road to New York, Rome, London, and Paris passes through Jerusalem. In other words, on their way to global domination, Islamists have determined that Jerusalem is a prize that must be plucked first. Without it, there's apparently nothing else worth fighting for.

If you're not Michael Ledeen, however, chances are *The Fight for Jerusalem* will leave you, let us say, slightly underwhelmed. Gold's method for proving his thesis is to collect sermons, books, pamphlets, and Internet postings of seemingly every wild-eyed Muslim preacher and militant crackpot who's ever mentioned Jerusalem and string them together in the most alarming way possible to prove a malevolent conspiracy to wrest Jerusalem from the hands of the Jews. He acknowledges that his Muslim sources may sound preposterous to the average Western reader, but he warns ominously that some of these individuals are actually quite popular within the Arab world. From there he makes the huge leap to claim that if Israel renounces an inch of Jerusalem, global *jihad* will result.

Similarly, I suppose one could argue that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is quite popular in certain circles. But just because millions of people read a book and even believe its premise, does that mean that Jews will actually take over the world banking system? Gold cannot tell the difference between anecdotal

and hard documentary evidence. The fact that there are Muslim clerics who preach *jihad* and the liberation of Jerusalem is an undeniable fact. But what does it all mean? Does it mean that al-Qaeda's forces will imminently march on the holy sites? Does it even mean that Jerusalem is under a long-term threat of Muslim takeover? The evidence seems thin at best.

The problems in *The Fight for Jerusalem* begin from its opening words: "Jerusalem was almost lost in July 2000..." Any notion that Jerusalem can be on the negotiating table is anathema to Gold. To consider ceding any Israeli control over the city is a betrayal of all that is good and decent in Western civilization. For once Israel gives up an inch, Arabs will be there to take a mile.

You can see Gold's obsession playing itself out in his linguistic choices. The Clintons and Baraks of the world plan to "divide" Jerusalem, never to "share" it. I didn't keep track, but the word "divide" must appear scores if not hundreds of times in reference to the city's future.

GOLD'S METHOD FOR PROVING HIS THESIS IS TO COLLECT BOOKS, PAMPHLETS, AND INTERNET POSTINGS OF EVERY WILD-EYED MUSLIM PREACHER AND MILITANT CRACKPOT WHO'S EVER MENTIONED JERUSALEM AND STRING THEM TOGETHER IN THE MOST ALARMING WAY POSSIBLE TO PROVE A MALEVOLENT CONSPIRACY.

Gold echoes the Holocaust denial meme in discussing Muslims who deny the Jewish claim to the Temple Mount. He calls them "Temple Deniers." Frankly, I had no idea that Yasser Arafat and other Palestinian leaders denied there was a Holy Temple on the site virtually the rest of the world accepts as being its location. Does this trouble me? Well, yes, I guess. But what does it actually mean? Why is it especially significant? Why is it anything more than yet another odd, slightly delusional belief that so many people on both sides of the conflict seem to share about their enemy?

Gold detests another idea advanced perhaps most prominently by the Iraq Study Group: that solving the Arab-Israeli

conflict would diminish Islamic extremism. He sees this notion as a red herring designed to decrease world support for Israel in its never ending fight against Palestinian militancy. But we can see the speciousness of Gold's reasoning in a passage in which he quotes Richard Clarke, writing about the Clinton rationale for a Middle East peace process: "If we could achieve a Middle East peace much of the popular support for al-Qaeda and much of the hatred for America would evaporate overnight." Gold comments, "[T]he evidence for his analysis was thin. Heavy U.S. engagement in Arab-Israeli peacemaking since 1993 had not reduced al-Qaeda's rage one iota; indeed, its attacks on U.S. interests continually escalated during the very same period. Notably, two months after Camp David, al-Qaeda attacked the USS Cole in Yemen, killing seventeen U.S. sailors."

What Gold neglects is that "heavy U.S. engagement in Arab-Israeli peacemaking" did not succeed in resolving the conflict. Does Clarke expect that al-Qaeda would ratchet down its anti-

American behavior in proportion to the level of our engagement in Israeli-Arab peace? Only a fool would believe this. Clarke's premise is based on an actual peace agreement which would subvert al-Qaeda's standing in the Arab world. Given that all of America's best efforts failed at Camp David, why would one expect al-Qaeda to give up the fight?

And in case you didn't know this already, Gold informs us that the wave of Arab immigration to Europe of the past 20 years or so is an extension of an ancient Muslim plot to take over the West: "Islamic empires ... halted their frontal assault on Europe in 1683 with the Ottomans' defeat at the gates of Vienna. This door remained closed for

centuries until the arrival of millions of North African and Turkish immigrants in Europe encouraged radical Islamic leaders to believe the assault on the continent could be resumed."

While many Middle East observers view Ariel Sharon's ill-fated walk on the Temple Mount as the fuel that sparked the first Intifada, not Gold. Camp David caused it:

When historical doors...are opened, enormous historical forces are unleashed, often resulting in a furious wave of violence lasting until a new balance of power is attained. The Camp David proposals reopened precisely such a historical door... In return for his peace offer, Barak received a new war against Israel.

In Gold's mind, Israeli efforts to address Arab concerns only stoke the fires of militancy. The most recent Lebanon war was caused, for Gold, not by a series of unresolved territorial claims among Israel, Lebanon, and Syria but rather by Israel's 2000 Lebanon withdrawal: "Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon had not diminished Middle Eastern violence, but rather provoked a new explosion of terrorism."

This is the mantra of those Israelis with a rejectionist mentality: show weakness and they redouble their efforts to annihilate you. There is no recognition of the fact that Israel's retention of conquered areas like the Shebaa Farms and Golan Heights fuels both Hezbollah's and Syria's hostility toward Israel.

Gold's book is also full of half-baked claims wholly unsupported by credible sources or evidence. Take for instance his characterization of the Muslim belief in the "end of days": "At the apocalyptic end of days, mainstream Muslims envision that a great, armed jihad will result in the subjugation of the entire world to Islam." Mainstream Muslims? Which mainstream Muslims? And where is his source to prove the existence of such a scenario within mainstream Muslim thought? This would be like quoting from the hair-raising "end of days" speculations of evangel-

ical firebrands like John Hagee—who envisions an apocalyptic war in which most of the world's Jews shall be killed—and extrapolating that this is a belief of "mainstream Christians."

Another one of Gold's favorite themes is the "infiltration" of al-Qaeda elements into the Palestinian territories: "The Gaza withdrawal also allowed for the formation of al-Qaeda cells in Gaza for the first time." First, we should acknowledge that there is serious doubt among many analysts about an al-Qaeda presence in Gaza. And even if there were, the Sharon withdrawal wouldn't necessarily have led to the formation of these alleged cells. In the deteriorating security climate of the past several years brought about by Israel's savage destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and security capabilities, new splinter groups have formed with allegiances to various clans, criminal elements, and possibly even al-Qaeda. The final problem with Gold's claim regarding what he melodramatically calls the "Talibanization" of Palestine is that he makes his case out to be a slam dunk when it is at most conjecture supported by a few tantalizing pieces of evidence.

Gold makes much of the radical Islamist vision of toppling secular Arab regimes, taking over Jerusalem, and establishing a worldwide "Muslim caliphate": "al-Qaeda [would] likely ... establish itself in a Jerusalem bereft of Israel's security presence in hopes of making the Holy City the seat of the new caliphate." So the reason Israel must never cede any part of Jerusalem to Palestinian control is that Muslim crackpots have a dream of making the Holy City the capital of some vague Islamic utopia. If this isn't the ultimate in far-fetched argumentation, I don't know what is. Interestingly, Dick Cheney, too, seems obsessed with the notion of the Muslim caliphate in his speeches attacking jihadist extremism.

A look through his sources reveals that Gold's relies heavily on neocon-oriented publications and individuals known for their hardline anti-Palestinian views. You'll find references to

Bernard Lewis, MEMRI, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the *Jerusalem Post*, Norman Podhoretz, Charles Krauthammer, Martin Kramer, Daniel Pipes, and the like. When analysts with alternative views are presented, it is usually in a disparaging context. The book jacket features blurbs by William Safire, James Woolsey, Richard Perle, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Gold focuses intensively not only on the Jewish history of Jerusalem but on the Christian presence there as well. Gold makes prominent mention of the Crusades and Muslim desecration of Christian holy places as if to make the case that Christians should make common cause with Jews against Palestinian control of any part of Jerusalem. The book will find a sympathetic audience among supporters of AIPAC and all those who seek evidence of Muslim perfidy wherever it can be found.

In the present stalemate in Palestine, in which both sides bring out the worst in each other, a book like this is not what is needed. What is needed is goodwill, tolerance, and recognition of the necessity of compromise to achieve peace. Jerusalem can be shared by both Israelis and Palestinians without global cataclysm resulting. Such a resolution will not be easy. There is much hatred and distrust among all involved—as Gold's book makes all too clear.

But the outlines of agreement are obvious to all but the most diehard. The Jewish neighborhoods of West Jerusalem should be under Israeli control and the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem should be under Palestinian control. The city should be the capital of two countries. This is what will end up happening. The only question is how long it will take to get there and how many more have to die in the meantime. ■

Richard Silverstein writes the Israeli-Palestinian peace blog Tikun Olam and is active in American Jewish peace efforts. He holds an MA in Comparative Literature from University of California, Berkeley with a specialty in Hebrew Literature.

[*Americanism: The Fourth Great Western Religion*, David Gelernter, Doubleday, 240 pages]

Will This God Also Fail?

By Paul Gottfried

IN *AMERICANISM*, a book-length discussion of the “American fourth religion,” David Gelernter fleshes out a theme he broached last year in *Commentary*. A mathematician and computer expert at Yale University, Gelernter first gained recognition 14 years ago for the toughness he displayed as a victim of the Unabomber after an attack that caused him severe physical injuries. He is a vigorous stylist, whose writing is marked by unfailingly forceful prose. If he were not riding a hobbyhorse—and one outside his expertise—his latest product would be much stronger. Unfortunately, the author’s tics get the better of him.

Although Gelernter does not dwell on his choice of title, his “fourth great Western religion,” after Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, refers to a distillation of the messianic American democratic conversionary faith that has supposedly accompanied Americans from the settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony onward. The faith that Gelernter presents is recognizably Protestant, but is also thought to be compatible with other religious traditions, particularly Old Testament Judaism as filtered through the author’s worldview. Gelernter’s study of Americanism brings to mind Will Herberg’s widely read exercise in religious sociology of 1955, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*. Tracing the transformation of America’s different faith traditions into a civil religion, Herberg was impressed by the impact of Americanization on religious thinking and practice. Significantly, he found this tendency to be worrisome and indicative of a certain spiritual shallowness. Needless to say, Gelernter feels

no such misgivings about his version of the “fourth religion.”

Gelernter’s preferred view of American history, which is indistinguishable from that of a mainstream Cold War liberal from the 1950s, emphasizes political hagiography. Its protagonists are the anti-slavery Emancipator and “America’s last and greatest founding father” Abraham Lincoln, the “Puritan” John Brown, Woodrow Wilson, who fought to “make the world safe for democracy,” Harry Truman, etc. The reader can fill in the rest of the slots reserved for Gelernter’s heroes and villains, that is, figures in a moral saga who seem to have been recycled from a mid-20th-century high-school civics textbook.

In order to locate the roots of our civil religion, the author starts predictably with the Puritans. As with Rorschach tests, Gelernter tells us much about himself by presenting the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a New World replication of Rabbinic Judaism. And though Protestant Calvinists were Hebraizing, Old Testament Christians, one may challenge the assumed degree of affinity between the Rabbis and Puritan divines.

GELERNTER TELLS US MUCH ABOUT HIMSELF BY PRESENTING THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY AS A NEW WORLD REPLICATION OF RABBINIC JUDAISM.

Gelernter’s treatment of America’s entry into World War I, a subject to which he devotes considerable space in this short book, reveals an *idée fixe* resting more on emotion than hard facts. Gelernter overstates his case by singling out Germany’s unleashing of the Schlieffen Plan as the “simple” cause of the outbreak of the war. Although the implementation of what turned out to be an unworkable plan may have been “the most decisive event of the twentieth century,” Germany’s three-pronged attack on France leading to the enveloping of Paris did not occur, *pace* Gelernter, as an exercise in Teutonic machismo. By the 1890s, the Germans faced an encircling Russo-French alliance. When they began their march

on France through Belgium, as the Schlieffen plan demanded, they were assuming, with good reason, that France’s ally, Russia, would attack them from the east. The German general staff jumped the gun by making a preemptive strike in the west, but they did so, according to the German historian Gerhard Ritter, out of “fatalism and desperation.” Informing Gelernter’s anti-German sentiment, beside the bitter memories of Nazi atrocities, may be the thesis of historian Fritz Fischer regarding Germany’s supposed bid for world domination. According to Fischer, the German government, cheered on by its rabidly nationalist subjects, plunged Europe into a general war as a means of economic and territorial expansion. Although this thesis is full of unproved premises, it would be helpful to be able to confront it directly in Gelernter’s book—rather than having to guess from whence he drew his opinions.

Gelernter then misrepresents Germany’s decision to back the Austrian invasion of Serbia once its complicity in the murders of the Austrian Archduke and his wife became known: “She [Aus-

tria] consulted her friend Germany. Germany urged her to go right ahead and smash Serbia if she felt like it. On the topic of smashing undersize neighbors, Germans were always sympathetic.” This requires clarification: both Serbia and, more distantly, Serbia’s protector Russia were involved in the assassination that led to the Austro-Hungarian invasion. The Serb government under the Karageorgevich dynasty made no secret about its intention to break apart the Habsburgs’ multinational monarchy; and the German Imperial government tried initially to hold back the Austrian invasion, even after the Serbs had turned down an Austrian ultimatum to allow Austrians to enter Serbia in pursuit of anti-Austrian terrorist rings. Further-

more, it is not necessary to endorse all of the questionable policies pursued by the German government in the years preceding the War, such as launching a vast naval program intended to reduce English maritime supremacy, to recognize the limits of Gelernter's interpretations. He adds nothing to historical debates with his overly broad generalizations.

Gelernter's praise of Wilson is lavish: "no president spoke the language of the Bible, divine mission, and American Zionism more consistently than Woodrow Wilson"; and his "speeches make it clear that Americanism inspired his agonized, epochal decision to take America into war." It might be useful to note less flattering historical accounts. Walter Karp, Arthur Ekirch, Robert Higgs, and Murray Rothbard have all brought up the breaches of civil liberties, the government's incitements to violence against German Americans, and the distortions of information committed by Wilson's government even before it "took" our country into the war. It speaks well for the U.S. that such blatant tyranny produced by the war party may be harder to get away with now than in the past.

THE NEOCONSERVATIVES' APPEAL TO GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC IDEALISM IS NOT BASED ON ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY—ANY MORE THAN BUSH'S RHETORIC IS.

These objections aside, there is a compelling aspect of Gelernter's argument. The messianic, missionary view of America's role in the world that he passionately commends and traces back to the Puritans is not without historical basis. His attempts to find it in the current president and in a series of dead ones are fully justified. Although their intentions are diametrically opposed, Gelernter's hymn to messianic Americanism and Richard Gamble's study of the religious origins of Wilsonianism, *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation*, complement each other. One might also mention James Kurth's essays in *Orbis* out-

lining the stages of the "Protestant deformation" culminating in the confusion between messianic democracy and a Christian view of history. The difference of course is that in contrast to Gelernter, Kurth and Gamble are serious Presbyterians who are sorely distressed by the "fourth great religion"—one that has allegedly swallowed up Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. These scholars have moved beyond the consoling hope that Gelernter's American ideal is a mere passing aberration. Both are convinced that the seeds of political messianism go deep into the American Protestant past and that the "deformation" did not begin with the neoconservative ascendancy over the Republican Party.

For those who may not have noticed, American evangelicals are more solidly behind George W. Bush's efforts to missionize for democracy and human rights than are Catholics or Jews. But the neoconservatives' appeal to global democratic idealism is not based on orthodox Christianity—any more than Bush's rhetoric is. Gamble and Kurth both address a relevant question about American religious history: why is it that Protestant millenarianism has become

ering. Is it possible to sustain a religion of exportable democracy without a supportive religious culture? Gelernter laments "how knowledge of the Bible is collapsing, among young people especially," and how "morality can get no purchase without religion." But he also believes that "secularists" won't win, although we are never told why. All Gelernter provide is a "guess" that an American population that is mostly biblically illiterate, and one guided by militantly secularist educators and media celebrities, will turn in the opposite direction. But putting aside this leap of faith, we may still be justified in asking: can Gelernter's version of the "American religion" continue to shape American internationalism without its specifically Protestant ingredient?

My answer is "possibly yes." Modern figures whom Gelernter considers good Christians, such as Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy, were not noticeably orthodox nor, in Kennedy's case, particularly devout. Present Republican oratory about global democracy would not have embarrassed the Clinton administration, and it may be hoping for too much that this phraseology and its underlying vision will go away if the Democrats win the presidency in 2008. The Wilsonian matrix will not likely fade from public policy even if the explicitly secularist Democrats succeed the Republicans. Clinton's speeches about nation building, those of his secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and Bush's Second Inaugural Address all share a common Wilsonian theme. Although Clinton's neoconservative critics may have scorned his ineffective "use of force," according to John Ehrman in *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, they never questioned his Wilsonian values. Gelernter's "fourth religion" may continue to thrive, even in a post-Judeo-Christian culture and even among those who are biblically unschooled. ■

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Snakes, Snails, and Puppy-Dog Tails

Hands are gnashed and teeth wrung over the current superiority of girls over boys in school. The probable consequences, both economic and social, are grave,

going far beyond cutesy gender-wars sparring. Why are boys crashing?

Some writers imply that boys are just, well, doltish and can't keep up. The evidence doesn't support the idea. In 1999—I pick that year because I then wrote a column on the question—the average math SAT score for boys was 531; for girls, 495. The respective verbal scores were 509 and 502. The number of boys scoring 800 in math, the highest possible score, was 4,815; of girls, 1,611. Girls with 800 verbal scores, 2,828; boys, 3,087. The disparity cannot well be explained by stupidity.

Nor is it that girls have gotten better. They have always done well in school. Yet boys are now doing much worse. Why? Perhaps because schools refuse to recognize that boys and girls are very different animals.

Girls co-operate; boys compete. Girls like order; boys, disorder. Girls like security; boys, adventure. Girls are not particularly physical; boys, relentlessly so.

I don't argue that either is better, only that the differences exist. Ignore them, and you get what we've got.

The schools today promote everything that boys aren't, don't want, and can't be. Boys are churning energy wads. They usually hate school. Girls, I think, do not. For boys the routine is horrible, the material boring, the enforced confinement to desks almost physically painful.

When I was in high school in King George County, Virginia, boys played

football at school, three hours of (full-contact) fast-break pickup basketball at the gym after school, and spent long afternoons swimming and canoeing in the river. We needed to burn off energy. It was a requirement for well being. The girls, by choice, did none of this.

Boys like to take chances, valuing freedom over security. My friends and I canoed into the Potomac in high waves with storm warnings out because it was fun, exciting, uncontrolled. Girls didn't. They could have, there being no restrictions on sales of canoes to girls, but they by choice did other things. Different animals.

Put boys in suburban moors where there is little physical to do; enact rules against hazardous sports such as tag and dodgeball; outlaw competition; tell them that everything they want to do is violent and evil; forbid them to swim without two lifeguards, a Coast Guard-approved life preserver, and sunblock—and you get miserable, frustrated boys who are likely to say the hell with it.

Today's schools are so heavily feminized that a boy feels as if he were in a convent. When I was in high school, roughly half of the teachers were men. Both sexes had teachers who understood them. It worked. Female teachers today, having little idea what makes boys tick, try to fit all into female roles. It doesn't work.

Further, boys suffer to the extent that schools value form over substance, neatness over knowledge, political correctness over thought, safety over every-

thing, and niceness, niceness, niceness. They have little patience with make-work projects that require cutting pictures from magazines. Their handwriting is typically poor. They aren't too good about getting homework in on time. Bright boys can deploy great intellectual intensity—watch one take apart his computer's motherboard—but they bore easily.

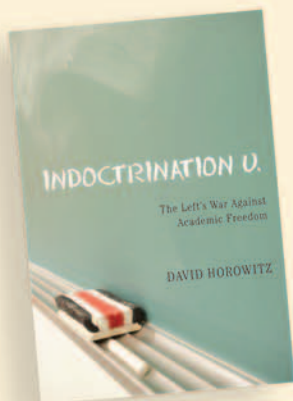
Remember that the dice are loaded against the highly intelligent, girls as well as boys. The teachers colleges get the dregs of the collegiate world, as has been shown time and again. When a teacher with an IQ of 95 faces a student at 150, they are virtually of different species. But girls are more—what is the word? Patient? Dutiful? Practical? Sally is likely to put up with a teacher she fully recognizes as an idiot and get a good grade. Billy is likely to bail.

A girl with high test scores will generally have good grades. A boy with high scores may come close to flunking out. (Guilty, your honor.) Different animals.

When boys do well on objective tests—IQ, SATs, GREs, National Merit, what have you—and also as engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs, and system programmers, but fail miserably in school, one might reasonably suspect that the problem is not boys but the schools.

If the schools want to teach boys (I don't think they do), they need to recognize that people come in two sexes; we might even value the difference. Let girls be girls and boys be boys. Hire staff evenly divided between the sexes. Don't impose on either sex behavior that is unnatural to it. Who knows? We could even essay common sense.

Nah, never happen. ■



INDOCTRINATION U.

By David Horowitz | ISBN: 978-1-59403-190-8 | \$21.95

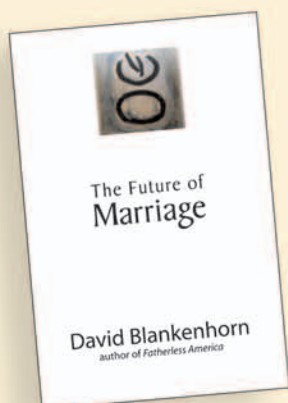
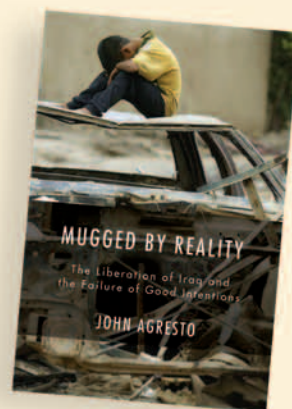
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BLOWING UP RUSSIA

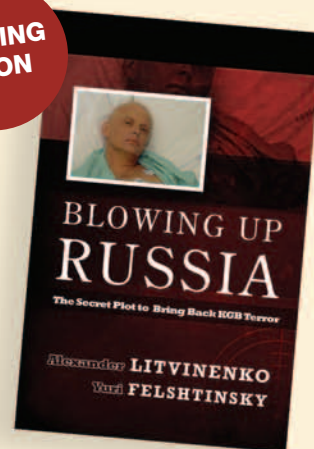
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